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ABSTRACT

This book covers various aspects of the "graded objectives movement" in England and is intended to help teachers understand the ideas behind the movement and to form working groups to implement it. Graded objectives are understood as those objectives which represent steps in a continuum that could be attempted by all learners who would need greater or lesser lengths of time to achieve their objectives. In addition to a presentation of the general aims of the study, the following topics are addressed: (1) syllabus design; (2) materials development and methodology; (3) testing; (4) organization, administration, and coordination of local working groups; and (5) projections for the future. Appendices include the following: (1) an alternative model for modern language examinations, (2) working party reports, (3) a report on an experiment involving evaluation of graded objectives and tests, (4) report of a working party on oral testing, and (5) addresses of working groups. A bibliography concludes the volume. (AMH)

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Graded Objectives in Modern Languages

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Introduction

Since this book was first projected, an increasing interest has been shown in graded objectives: in the last year the number of groups has increased from 28 to 53, while the number of candidates entered for tests has risen dramatically in those areas where tests, formerly restricted to pilot groups, have been opened up to all interested schools. For over two years CILT has been collecting information and distributing it in collections of loose papers: these papers have now become so numerous that we are relieved to be able to offer this information in a more attractive, durable package and, we hope, in a more readable form.

The aim of this volume is to help teachers who are interested in the ideas behind the graded objectives movement, and particularly those who would like to form local groups with a view to experimenting for themselves. We hope that they will find in it a clear exposition of the theory, together with practical suggestions as to how they might make similar moves.

The authors would like to stress, however, that this is very much an ongoing movement, in a constant state of flux. We have recorded here some details of the schemes at a certain point in time, but we recognise that they will - and must - evolve from year to year in the light of experience. No 'new' idea can remain so without constant rethinking and development. We suggest that any new group now entering the field might well take a judicious mixture of what is already available, concentrating on making improvements in the light of local needs rather than starting from scratch. At the same time no group would claim to have a definitive model, and there is still plenty of room for initiative.

We should like to record our thanks to all the hard-working honorary administrators of the groups mentioned in this book, who have co-operated in sending information to CILT, especially for Chapter 5. For reasons of space we have been unable to include full details of all groups, but we hope that this book includes most of the ideas now flourishing in different areas.

Teachers interested in joining a local scheme should consult the address list at the end of the book. They may also like to know that CILT has a reference collection of graded syllabuses and tests, which can be consulted in the Language Teaching Library.

1

General Aims

The basic principles of the Graded Objectives Scheme for Modern Language Learning, as they are at present realised, were first expressed in opposition to the plans for new public examinations to be taken at age sixteen-plus. The feasibility studies carried out with a view to amalgamating CSE and GCE 'O' level produced specimen examinations which seemed just as irrelevant to the most pressing needs of modern language teaching and learning in schools as those they were intended to replace. The uneasiness about performance in modern language teaching and learning then felt has continued to be increasingly expressed at all levels both official and unofficial. The enormous success of schools and teachers in extending modern language teaching from the 30 percent or so of the secondary school population of the early 60's (the population of the grammar schools plus a selected few in some secondary modern schools) to the almost 90 percent of the mid 70's has been obscured by what appears to be a failure to get much that is worthwhile taught to the majority.

Most British school pupils have found the obligatory acquisition of a modern language (usually French) a less than rewarding experience. Their failure to find the learning tasks presented to them relevant, meaningful or satisfying is only exceeded by their failure to demonstrate an acceptable performance in these tasks. Teachers have been clearly aware of the problem, and courses, conferences and publications on teaching the less able have always found a ready audience. Adequate pre- and in-service training dealing with the problem has frequently been lacking, however, as have appropriate methods and materials, efficient facilities and staff. But even where real and effective efforts have been made in this direction, a sense of aimlessness and frustration is still often apparent among both teachers and taught. This is largely due to the pressures exerted by public examinations at sixteen-plus, which represent the only overt aims of language teaching in the schools. Sometimes after only one year of language learning, inevitably after two or three, pupils are given tests to see if they are likely to pass CSE or GCE 'O' level. This obviously leads to a large number of pupils being set unsuitable tasks at which they not surprisingly fail. This policy of elimination of the majority by failure to clear hurdles originally intended for a minority has led to a situation where, on average, only a third to a quarter of the age group are still studying a modern language after two or three years of learning and where only an estimated twelve to fifteen percent achieve grade C or better in 'O' level or Scottish 'O' grade and ten to fifteen percent more achieve a CSE grade 2 and below or grades D and E in 'O' level/O grade.

The introduction of CSE in England and Wales was intended to allow a much greater slice of the population to leave school with an examination certificate proving satisfactory performance in the one or more subjects the pupil had chosen. One might have expected that this innovation would have resulted in a greater differentiation of objectives for different levels of ability, but the power of the traditional examinations remained too strong. In spite of some attempts to introduce new types of test, modern language examination syllabuses at all levels remained very heavily weighted in favour of the emphasis on formal grammatical accuracy that had always characterised the aims of grammar school language learning. Only the Scottish alternative 'O' grade has offered a real alternative in the form of an examination based on communicative language; this option has been available for more than ten years. Some English examination boards have introduced alternative syllabuses or limited innovations which have somewhat redressed the balance, eg communicative language tasks were introduced into speaking and listening tests. But the majority of pupils still learning a language after four or five years continued to take examinations in which, at best, 'language in use' plays a minor part and, at worst, scarcely exists at all. Meanwhile, for the remaining two-thirds or more, such changes have been irrelevant: they have been already deemed incapable of following an examination course. Neither do they receive any credit, however limited, for their two or three years of language learning.

The proposed sixteen-plus examination ignored this latter problem because it took for granted the principle of the five year course which must be completed before a public examination could be taken. But a five year course is irrelevant to most language learners in the new secondary schools. It is wasteful and illogical to start pupils off on a course which two-thirds of them will not complete. Moreover, it is pernicious as well, as most give up with the negative feeling that they are not good enough to continue. It is necessary to propose goals which more pupils can reach and by doing so experience success in language learning. The first principle of the graded objectives scheme was therefore that the traditional five year course to CSE/'O' level should be broken up into a set of shorter term objectives, each one leading to the next and each one building directly on its predecessor. It was quickly seen that this series of steps need not stop at an equivalent of an 'O' level; it could go on to cover sixth-form studies and beyond.

The nature of the skills to be learnt for public examinations also seems ready for reappraisal. The idea of language as a vehicle for the communication of meanings which had found some limited expression in the greater emphasis placed on all skills in most examinations, needed to be taken further. The projected sixteen-plus examinations seemed, however, to differ little in this respect from the already existing CSE/GCE 'O' level. The movement for a defined content syllabus, which had gained considerable strength by that time, also prompted the idea that objectives generally might be more clearly defined so that pupils would know more precisely what it was they had to learn to do. The most worthwhile objectives would seem to be the ability to use the language for realistic purposes rather than, for example, the ability to describe the language or use it for purposes which the actual user would rarely need to employ. The second principle of the graded examinations scheme was therefore that objectives should be behavioural, that is, they should be defined in terms of what tasks a candidate would be able to perform in the language. Furthermore, these definitions should be as detailed as possible.

It was clear that communicative competence in practical situations (for this is what the objectives turned out to be) was a skill needed by all language learners and not simply by those who would opt out after two or three years. The graded objectives therefore would not be tied to an ability range: they would not be specifically aimed at low ability learners. They would represent steps in a continuum which could be attempted by all learners, who would need greater or lesser lengths of time to achieve their objectives according to how much time they could devote to their studies or how much native ability they might possess. Slow learners might take a year to acquire what a sixth-form beginner of above average ability might cover in half a term. It followed then that the objectives should not be tied to an age range either, so that anyone, in school or out, of any age, would be able to attempt any level of which she might think herself capable. Thus the third principle was established: that the graded objectives would not be aimed at a particular age or level of ability but would be available to both adults and school pupils irrespective of their perceived ability. It was hoped that this would not only encourage learners by giving them a definite feeling of success in the early stages of learning but would also help them to think of continuing to build on their studies at a later stage after leaving school, or to pick them up again if they had, for some reason, been obliged to drop them. It was thought also that the scheme might encourage the learning of languages other than French by providing publicly recognised qualifications for shorter periods of study.

In 1974 Harding and Page reviewed the situation and made suggestions about the possible contents of the first three grades of a graded objectives system.[1] This model formed the basis for the first syllabuses and tests to be produced by Oxfordshire and York, following the setting up of working parties in 1976.[2] The model envisaged a series of cumulative graded steps in language learning applicable to both adults and school pupils. Understandably school teachers have felt the most pressing need to provide motivation where it was at its lowest for both themselves and their pupils - among the less able and particularly those who were unlikely to continue language learning after two or three years. Consequently the ideas were first used with those groups. The Oxford scheme was initially aimed deliberately at the less able and the York scheme, although intended for the the whole ability range, was at the beginning confined in practice to the less able. Limited experiments with mature learners have been carried out both intensively and extensively and have produced very encouraging results. In the case of the original two projects it is clear that some of the hoped-for aims are being achieved: a greater number of keen and motivated pupils, with many more now wishing to continue with modern languages when given the option.[3] Both projects have expanded considerably. Oxford has widened its target population to include the more able, and tests five languages. The York French group[4] has extended its range to cover more advanced learners and now has a link with the public examination system in that its Level 4 is recognised as a Mode 3 CSE (which means that an 'O' level equivalent can be obtained).[5] All this indicates a growing confidence among teachers, pupils and examiners in the full potential of the system. The model itself proceeds from the conviction that a high percentage of all learners should be able to attain some measurable standard of achievement in a modern language. This achievement should be seen as the successful completion of a series of closely-defined tasks in communicative situations. Analogies may be drawn with sport or music examinations or even the driving test. Learners are not seen as competing against each other as in a norm-referenced public examination; rather they are required to fulfil a set of criteria, ie to perform a number of tasks to a (subjectively agreed) level of efficiency. (Whilst criterion-referenced testing is still relatively undeveloped, particularly at the level of beginners, the current experiments are seen as contributions to the refinement of the technique). Learners need not or even should not necessarily attempt every level: this decision is left to the learner in consultation with the teacher. Any set of tests may be taken again if a learner so wishes. Ideally the tests may be taken at any time when learners feel that they are ready, in much the same way as Scouts, Guides, entrants for the Duke of Edinburgh's award, etc take their tests at times suitable to themselves. Some schemes are already experimenting with this approach, but since this implies obvious organisational problems in school, it may never be possible to have the tests 'on offer' in the way originally intended. But a good deal of flexibility has been found to be possible and it is important to break the iron rule of end-of-year/term examinations being the only occasions when formal assessment can be made, irrespective of the point reached in the learning process by any particular pupil. In the Harding/Page article mentioned above, three possible levels are described in terms of the possible target group(s), general aims and terminal tasks, together with the necessary language skills and (some of) the exponents to realise these. The model is pragmatic rather than 'scientific', being based on the known and projected needs and capacities of various groups.

Harding and Naylor (AVLJ 17/3 - written 1979) have taken this model further. They base their suggestions on the development of the school pupil as motivating an increasing complexity of communication tasks and the language needed to perform them. Their model seems equally applicable to adult learners, as the skills involved move from predictable transactional language to tasks where the linguistic content is not predictable, as learners become increasingly able to use the language to express personal meanings. No-one who has worked in any of the schemes underestimates the difficulties in converting these ideas into the practical realities of classroom teaching and eventual assessment. That, however, is the main problem of syllabus design.

NOTES

1. See Appendix I.
2. In this chapter, reference is made mainly to those projects which have produced syllabuses or/and tests which indicate particular trends or/and conclusions.
3. See Appendix III.
4. There is a separate York German Group.
5. See Chapter 4.

2

Syllabus Design

The specification of behavioural objectives as outlined in the previous chapter poses problems of syllabus design, since it is necessary to apply different criteria for the inclusion of items in a syllabus from those usually applied in modern language courses. Most practising teachers have not needed in the main to concern themselves with the design of a syllabus, that is, with deciding what pupils have to learn. This has usually been effected by some outside agency. The most powerful is the public examination taken at age sixteen-plus. At the very least, past examination papers suggest, often without much precision, what a pupil is supposed to know in order to attempt them successfully. Regulations, examiners' reports, etc will usually reveal more[1]. Sometimes examination boards specify a lexical and/or grammatical list. All these sources provide a testing syllabus, an inventory of items expected to be known, whilst teaching syllabuses, an arrangement of these items (or a broad generalisation encompassing the requirements of most examinations at a given level) in a graded order suitable for presentation by the teacher to the pupil, is usually provided by the textbook. Most teachers supplement textbooks with various sorts of ancillary material, but the textbook course provides the backbone which ensures a systematic coverage of whatever points the textbook writer has considered appropriate for pupils to learn. In spite of apparent differences of approach and much radical difference in method of presentation, all such systems follow a similar principle because they share a common view of language learning which implies a particular sort of objective. Any syllabus is a selection from a total body of knowledge and a selection cannot be made without having some grounds for making it; it would be difficult to justify a purely random syllabus. The grounds for making the syllabus usually constitute the objective. If we look at language learning in schools in this light we usually find that the grounds for selection of any given item are because it is likely to appear in a public examination - in French most of the indicative is learnt by age sixteen-plus but the subjunctive is not, precisely for this reason. This of course begs the question of what grounds the examiners have for their particular syllabus. These are frequently not very clear but in fact imply the same objective that has obtained in language learning/teaching for centuries.

There are, in fact, two ways of looking at the problem of the selection of language items to form a syllabus. The first is to see the language as an entity to be mastered like a mountain that has to be climbed. This was the view of the classicists teaching Latin and Greek and is still the view that inspires virtually all school teaching materials and examinations at the moment. As the climber moves from the easier slopes to the more difficult so the learner moves from those parts of the language which are judged structurally and conceptually easier to master to those which are more complex. Hence the movement from the article in French in the first lesson through the present tense to those items considered more difficult like the conditional and the use of the present participle, though there has always been some concession to frequency of use, eg in the early learning of 'avoir' and 'être'. The path is long and arduous and many fall by the wayside - about two-thirds of our present school population in fact. John Trim[2] has described this as the 'gradus ad Parnassum' approach. A major drawback is that one cannot really admire the view until one has reached the top. One may be allowed some glimpses on the way up but the main preoccupation is with the difficulty of the ascent. Pupils who give up language learning before the end have frequently little to show for it in terms of language usable in practical situations. Frequently, therefore, they also have negative feelings about their own capacity for language learning since they have spent a good number of years on it and have apparently learnt nothing worthwhile. The audio-lingual/audio-visual revolutions have in fact changed this situation only marginally, as they were concerned mainly with method, and how to present material to the learner. Similarly the growing concern with oral proficiency has meant a shift of emphasis in the skills learnt and some consequent change in content, but the approach has remained much the same. The partitive article in French may be taught through a shopping scene instead of a set of translation sentences but the objective remains the learning of the article.

The second way of looking at the problem is to turn in the opposite direction and, instead of looking at the language, to look at the learners. What are their needs, what do they want to use the language for? Bertrand Russell puts the point very neatly:

'The purpose of words, though philosophers (and, he might have added, language teachers) seem to forget this simple fact, is to deal with matters other than words. If I go into a restaurant and order my dinner, I do not want my words to fit into a system with other words, but to bring about the presence of food'.[3]

Thus, when we utter language we are not usually concerned with consciously operating a system but with conveying a meaning. For the learners of a foreign language the meanings they can express cannot from the beginning be as wide as those of native speakers. What do they want to use the language for?

'The object in teaching a language, unless it is simply that of getting pupils over an important educational hurdle, is to enable the learner to behave in such a way that he can participate to some degree and for certain purposes as a member of a community other than his own'.[4]

It is true that in the United Kingdom the object of language teaching in schools has indeed been that of getting pupils over an important educational hurdle by preparing them for public examinations at age sixteen-plus which serve as an all-purpose qualification for higher education or employment. There is no reason why this aim should not be combined with the acquisition of useful knowledge of the language, and 'useful' is best defined by the second part of Pit Corder's definition. Here the important words are 'to some degree and for certain purposes'. It is the problem of syllabus designers to define that degree and those purposes which then become the objectives of the syllabus.

The idea of looking at the learners and trying to find out what their needs are so that they can be taught the language necessary for satisfying those needs has given rise to an explosion of activity in languages for special purposes, particularly in the teaching of English as a foreign language. It is also, of course, the basis of the work of the Council of Europe which has systematised the concepts of notions and functions; this work has resulted in the various 'threshold levels'.[5]

Often, though, and this is particularly true of language learning in schools, it is impossible to predict what the learners' needs might ultimately be. The school pupil will have potential needs of all sorts and the need for a general education in which foreign language learning has a valuable part to play, but obvious enough special needs from which a syllabus may be derived do not in this case exist. The temptation to go back to the 'mountain' view is strong but should be resisted. As has been said, it places language meaning second after structure when meaning is in fact the primary purpose of language and it gives no indication of appropriateness; it may give learners a structure but it does not tell them when to use it[6]. Moreover, as Burstall showed,[7] and as is known from general experience, the popular view of the successful language learner is one who can perform in the language, can deal with meanings in practical situations. A syllabus based on use therefore carries conviction with the learners even if they have not an immediate need to put the learning to good effect. As far as school pupils are concerned, practical objectives which have this face validity can be postulated. (See syllabus extracts later in this chapter.) They tend to arise in the form of situations that pose a problem: you want to buy an ice cream or a souvenir or find your way in a strange town; how are you going to do it? The syllabus designer analyses the situation, lists the language items needed and the teacher presents them to the learner in any way she thinks appropriate. No particular method is implied but the problem of grammatical complexity or linearity are largely, though not, as we shall see, completely, ignored.

The limitations of this approach soon however, become apparent. Firstly, there is a danger that pupils learn the language for a given situation but not the means to transfer this to other situations. They run the risk of being able to parrot a few phrase book language tokens but little else. They are in fact involved in 'language-like behaviour' and not in language learning (see Spolsky, and Wilkins). This is not a negligible performance; many a holiday or business trip has been ruined for precisely the lack of this limited skill; but it is not the sort of creative, independent use of language to produce personal meanings that we are aiming at.

Secondly, the number of situations in which predictable items of language occur are relatively few and the acquisition of those items alone would represent a low level of performance. Thirdly, the situations in which even the inexperienced traveller, and even, one might say, particularly the inexperienced traveller, might find herself are largely unpredictable. Neither the teacher nor the learner can say with safety precisely what language might be required. Fourthly, situations themselves do not necessarily control the language that may occur within them. Apart from the severely restricted transactional language involved in buying a loaf of bread it is possible for any sort of conversation to arise in a breadshop.

An extension of this idea is to use topics (ref Vivian Cooke) - fashion, pollution, etc - which the pupils might choose for themselves so that their study is concerned primarily with the content and the language learning is a means to that end. This has similar drawbacks to the situation system. How does the teacher predict what topics might be acceptable? If the choice is left entirely open to the pupil then problems of materials, preparation and time become acute. The language items learnt may not be readily transferable unless this is made apparent by reference to some system outside the topics themselves. Then we are back at the beginning again, choosing a topic to illustrate an abstract system rather than because the content is important.

The obvious need to arrive at a more abstract system which, unlike traditional grammar, is based upon communication needs, has led to the elaboration of notions and functions. If we analyse communicative situations we find a great deal of overlap. 'Je voudrais' is applicable to buying but also to asking one's way in the street or trying to recover lost property.

Such language items illustrate categories of use that are more general than the particular situations in which they have been learnt. These categories have been described as notions and functions. Functions are what we do with language: we seek and impart information, we express agreement/disagreement, likes/dislikes, we deny, confirm, accept, doubt, give or refuse permission, etc. Notions are what we talk about: general notions, such as time, space, size, shape, temperature, and specific notions such as jobs, people, the task in hand, etc.

This system, in the way we now know it, has been largely the work of D A Wilkins[8] who elaborated it for the Council of Europe Modern Language Project. His ideas were first put into practical form by J Van Ek in *The Threshold Level*, a definition of the basic language knowledge required in English for a person to live and work in an English-speaking country. Equivalent descriptions have been made in French (*Un niveau-seuil*), German, (*Kontaktschwelle*), Spanish (*Un nivel umbral*) and Italian (*Livello-soglia*).

The most accessible introductions to the considerable amount of work done by the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project are: Van Ek, J: *The Threshold Level for Modern Language Learning in Schools*, Longman, 1976; Trim, J: *Some possible lines of development of an overall structure for a European unit/credit scheme for foreign language learning by adults*, Strasbourg, 1978; Page, B: 'Notions, Functions and Threshold Levels: a review of the significance for language teachers of the work of the Council of Europe', *Audio-Visual Language Journal*, Vol 17 No 2, 1979).

These ideas have already had a considerable effect on language teaching outside schools. The BBC courses in German (*Kontakte*, *Wegweiser*, *Kein Problem*), French (*Ensemble*, *Sur le Vif*, *Allez France*) and Spanish (*Digame*, *Por Aqui*) illustrate them well. Instead of chapters headed 'The present tense', as in grammar-based courses, or 'A picnic', as in situation-based courses, we have chapters headed 'Getting what you want' or 'Accepting an invitation'. The shopping scene is not now contrived to illustrate and drill interrogatives or partitive articles but used to teach greetings, requests; expressing likes/dislikes/preferences; dealing with quantity, quality, shape, size; managing numbers; expressing satisfaction; taking leave. Not all of these would be taught at once, of course, and many of the functions can in fact be expressed at different levels of complexity. To express likes and dislikes in French one needs only to start with 'J'aime....' and 'Je n'aime pas....' but beyond this basic expression of the function there is an ascending order of language complexity and social appropriateness.

Even with these more generalisable categories of language, similar dangers continue to exist. We may still not be giving pupils the means to generate sentences for themselves in new situations, means by which they can perceive patterns, analogise, and realise which words fit with which; in fact we may still not be giving them enough idea of structure to enable them to make sentences for themselves. This is a very real problem. It almost appears as though we have on the one hand a grammatical approach which enables those who persist with it to generate enormous numbers of sentences which may not be of any use to them and on the other a communicative competence approach which enables them to operate only in specifically limited areas. Firstly, let it be said that the fact that learners can operate even in limited areas is not to be underestimated. The obvious success thereby felt by pupils is one of the most constant elements reported by teachers engaged in graded objectives schemes. Secondly, it is clear that the two systems must be merged.

Several of the groups engaged in producing syllabuses are energetically tackling this problem. Probably the most prominent is the Lothian group led by John Clark, who has stressed from the outset of his work the necessity to equip learners with the structural knowledge that will enable them to cope with unpredictable language needs as well as predictable ones. The experience of some groups suggests that the matter is best seen as steps in a progression from rigidity to flexibility rather than as a confrontation and subsequent compromise of two principles. The early levels, perhaps even only the first one, would be completely prescribed whereas later ones would be less and less so thereby giving learners an increasing opportunity for shaping the language to express their own meanings in response to their own needs. When defining the prescripton of the early levels and the looser definition of later ones some groups have found it necessary to postulate a stereotype of the learner in order to arrive at the needs she might have: a child on a school trip, on a family exchange, receiving an exchange visitor in her own home, dealing with foreign tourists in home town, acting as interpreter for parents on a holiday abroad.

Harding and Naylor have used the developmental stages of child maturation to define the range of tasks the later levels may involve. Although the model is worked out from that standpoint it seems readily adaptable to the needs of the adult learner who is seeking a general competence in the language.

All this raises two fundamental questions:

(1) How far can we define a communicative syllabus before the explicit objectives become too inappropriate for an individual learner's needs?

(2) What means can we use to convey the knowledge of the language necessary to express those needs without undermining the communicative intention of the defined syllabus?

There are obvious implications here not only for assessment systems, whether objective or impressionistic, summative or continuous assessment, but also for methods, the answer to question 2 being possibly largely methodological, and also, of course, for materials. All teachers cannot be expected to create materials all the time, but we should ask ourselves how far commercial materials would fix teaching situations which should remain as fluid as possible in order to respond to learner needs. The basic change remains however: grammar will no longer impose its own hierarchical system on language learning; communication needs will come first and grammar will serve them.

In practice, this means that we will no longer automatically begin by teaching the present tense or working out a situation to teach it simply because the present tense has always come first in the list of tenses to be taught. We will teach the present tense when it is needed for a particular purpose. The gradual accumulation of those purposes will then define what the present tense is used for. This cyclical approach which can be applied to notions/functions to deal with their increasing complexity as well as to structural items, is not all that unfamiliar. Not all the uses of the present tense were ever taught at once: its equivalence to a future, its use in French with words like 'depuis', were usually dealt with at a much later stage.

As the pupil progresses, a further problem arises; communication in its simplest definition becomes increasingly insufficient as a criterion for judging performance. For example, if conveyance of basic information is the only criterion, a sort of pidgin would be adequate or at very least a learner would reach a plateau of 'competence' which would in fact be a mastering of a series of more or less crude approximations to what a native speaker would expect to hear. Therefore criteria of acceptability and likelihood have to be employed.[9] All these things are woefully subjective, but then, so is 'communication' itself, and so, frequently, is grammatical accuracy, to a greater or lesser extent.

It would be mistaken to assume that the teachers who have worked out the syllabuses now operating in the various graded objectives schemes, were all familiar with this theoretical background. The opposite is the case. The Oxford and York schemes, the two which have had the greatest effect outside their own areas, were elaborated initially without any close knowledge of Wilkins' notional/functional ideas or of Van Ek's Threshold Level. They were rather inspired by activities such as the role-playing tests already used in some examinations, the module approach used for example by Michael Buckby in York for several years, and the Harding/Page level definitions which were themselves purely subjective suggestions worked out in opposition to the obvious artificiality of most public examination tasks. The fact that theoretical work has tended to confirm the intuitions of that early period is one of the heartening aspects of the situation.

The compilers of the first Oxfordshire Level 1 syllabus selected language exponents which were then listed under six topic headings (travel, café/restaurant, shopping, accommodation, the town, personal information) of which the first at Level 1 is given at the end of this chapter. It is stated that all the items listed under Speaking and Reading will be expected to be understood aurally, that items are to be transferred from one topic to another where appropriate and that the listening test will contain elements that are not listed so that candidates learn to recognise familiar items embedded among unfamiliar ones. This early Oxford syllabus has been much revised and a new Level 3, at present only in draft, divides each topic into Themes, Tasks and Functions and then lists the language exponents under Specific Notions and Structures. There is also a separate list of General Notions (which includes a grammatical inventory) and Actes Sociaux.

Some areas have taken over the Oxfordshire syllabus almost unchanged, others have adapted it to a smaller or greater extent to meet local needs. The Northamptonshire syllabus is reasonably typical of this last group. The working party there felt there were three 'crisis points' in language learning in secondary schools (terms 4, 6 and 8) and decided to aim their three levels at these points. Each level was to have a theme (a day trip to France, a stay in a 'colonie' and a stay in a family). The syllabus is defined and laid out in very much the Oxford fashion but testing tends to be more like the York model. Northamptonshire also use an element of continuous assessment in the oral test.

Another group which shows at the same time the influence of the Oxfordshire model and a strongly independent adaptation of it is one operating a pilot project in selected secondary schools in Lancashire and Cumbria. Their Level 1 is based on almost exactly the same topics as Northampton but the extract shows the difference that can arise even within the same topic area

In the York scheme, the working party decided from the beginning that such was the diversity of materials in the schools that a syllabus of the Oxfordshire type would cause problems for the teachers. Since the working party consisted of the teachers whose pupils would be taking the test it was possible to agree on test content without defining the syllabus on which it was based beyond listing the topics or tasks involved in the tests. These appear on the back of the certificate awarded. '...candidates must demonstrate an ability to...ask the way and understand directions, shop for food, souvenirs, postcards, stamps, etc, go to a café and restaurant, travel by rail or road, stay in an hotel, campsite or French home, youth hostel,...take part in a simple conversation with a French speaking person who is trying to get to know them,...read short stories and letters in simple French'. This is in contrast to the Oxfordshire scheme in which the precise French required to perform the task is given. The York group started with Level 2 because they wished to give recognition to those third-year pupils who were probably going to opt out of further language study. Their Level 1, worked out later, is based on three situations (shopping, in a café, asking the way). The group has maintained this approach most successfully for several years and has a Level 4 which is accepted as a CSE Mode 3 by the YREB. It is undoubtedly true, however, that this has been made possible by keeping the number of participating schools small so that virtually all can have a hand in test production.

The Leeds working party chose the twelve topics of *Threshold Level* (or rather, their more convenient expression on page 15 of *Waystage*), as the framework of their syllabus. Within the topics a choice was made by the working party of teachers as to how much of each topic the levels should contain. Levels 2 and 3 were worked out first partly for the same reasons as York and partly because of an added circumstance: Leeds has a Middle School system taking children aged nine to thirteen. It was hoped that Levels 2 and 3 might provide a link between work in Middle and High Schools. At Level 1 it has been felt necessary to produce a complete word and structure list if only to make clear to teachers not in the working party what a minimum competence really is, eg in many cases, monosyllabic verbless utterances.

It should be stressed that all these syllabuses are under constant revision. Each year of practice reveals weaknesses and strengths and suggests refinements. They are also usually accompanied by explanatory documents and analyses of various sorts (grammatical and functional, for instance). Anyone wishing to use them should obtain all these and not rely on the possibly mistaken impressions gained from the necessarily brief extracts given at the end of this chapter.

It is extremely difficult to give meaningful extracts from the syllabuses created by working parties in Lothian and West Sussex. The pioneering work of John Clark, Assistant Adviser in modern languages, Lothian Region, has led to detailed syllabuses, which are being produced in French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian for Stages 1 to 4 of the Lothian project. Stage 5 is currently represented by the existing 'O' grade. The syllabuses are based on results obtained from a questionnaire to beginners in schools, and on consensus achieved between teachers. Draft syllabuses for the first two years of the secondary school are available in French, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian, but these are now being rewritten and added to in terms of the Regional Stages proposed.

The Lothian syllabuses divide communication into three broad areas: interaction between speakers or writers; information, where the speaker searches for, extracts, processes and uses information for her own purposes; and interest, where the learner uses language for fun through reading stories, playing games, singing songs, etc.

The table of contents and the Introduction defining the three parts are common to all the syllabuses as are the definitions of the communicative functions and the general and specific notions. We give extracts from the Functions and Specific Notions sections to show how they are set out and what they mean in terms of actual language exponents. See pages 23 and 24.

Section A (Interaction) is the largest, covering 62 out of 71 pages in the German syllabus and similar proportions of the others.

Section B lists areas where background knowledge is expected: home and housing, shops and post offices, streets and towns, travelling, school and education, holiday patterns, leisure time activities, food and drink, restaurants and cafés. Section B also gives an indication of the sort of language activities involved in seeking, extracting and using information provided by authentic foreign material.

Section C indicates language activities that are interesting and pleasurable for their own sake: games, songs, reading, etc.

The Lothian syllabuses are intended as check-lists of what pupils should be able to do and should know at the various Stages. The content is not sequenced.

The school must sequence the activities, functions, notions, grammar and vocabulary into convenient Waystages (lasting probably from four to ten weeks) and the school must produce Pupil Progress Cards which spell out the various communicative activities and functions through which the pupil must progress on her way towards the regional Stage in question. These will be worked out on the basis of materials available. They are Pupil syllabuses.

Assessment in the project is directed towards helping the learner to chart her own progress, discover her own strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate action. This is done through diagnostic checks; achievement tests at regular intervals, the results of which are recorded in a Pupil Profile; and surrender value tests at appropriately staged intervals, which aim to provide the learner with a dipstick reading of her ability at that moment in time to deal with the unpredictability of the real world of communication in a foreign language. Awards on a Regional Record of Achievement in Modern Languages validate progress made.

The most recent description of the system appears in Modern Languages in Scotland, No 19, February 1980.

The West Sussex syllabus worked out under the direction of Eric Garner, County Adviser for modern languages, is also based directly on the work of the Council of Europe and acknowledges a debt to John Clark's work. Again it is difficult to summarise. The testing syllabus for Level 1 in French occupies 23 A4 pages and there is a similar number of explanatory documents. In particular those marked F/1/2 Background and F/1/4 Content and Method deserve to be widely read as they constitute a distinct contribution to language teaching in a general sense as well as illuminating the particular problems implied in a graded objectives approach. The extracts give the outline content and samples from the topic, function and notion descriptions. It is assumed that Level 1 will provide an appropriate goal for many pupils aged eight to twelve in Middle Schools who have followed a French course for two years and for pupils in the second year of an eleven to sixteen/eighteen secondary course. The intention is to produce five levels ending with an 'O' level equivalent in French, German and possibly Spanish.

Three other projects should be mentioned where the syllabus is provided by particular course materials. After producing the Eclair course, ILEA provided tests to go with it. In content, form and tasks they resemble closely the course from which they derive. The National S1/S2 French Working Party based on Stirling University and directed by R M Johnstone has written a course Tour de

France aimed at the whole ability range. It has diagnostic and attainment tests built in to each unit. Both of these projects are too large to summarise; detailed descriptions can be consulted elsewhere.[10]

The South West Region Modern Languages Credit System (a consortium of the LEAs of Avon, Dorset, Gloucester, Somerset, Cornwall and East Sussex), directed by David Ellis, is also closely linked with particular materials (Destination France covers a large proportion of the French syllabus). It is aimed at slower or less able learners though it has also proved suitable for adult learners with limited needs. It has three credits implying different learner situations: an organised group visit (all found), an independent group visit (fending for itself), an individual visit to a family home (social contact). The learning tasks become more demanding only insofar as the requirements of the situation are more demanding. The major difference with other schemes, however, is that the system 'is not intended to be what is known as a "graded examination" scheme. The three credits...are not notional levels on a scale....We are not aiming to build up vertically to anything resembling an existing public examination.' Strictly speaking, therefore, the scheme does not fall within the terms of reference of this book though it has obvious relevance.

The scheme devised by David Cross and his colleagues at Archbishop Ramsey School, Camberwell, illustrates the way some individual schools have arrived at graded levels of attainment to satisfy needs within their own schools. Many of these (eg Archbishop Michael Ramsey, Camberwell; Orwell School, Felixstowe; Dorcan School, Swindon; Wright Robinson High School, Gorton, Manchester) were in operation even before the bigger graded examinations schemes were set up.

The AMR certificates are 'Interpreter's Certificates'. Levels 1 and 2 include listening and survival reading tests and an oral. Level 5 comprises:

(1) Choose some of London's main tourist attractions. Be able to say something, briefly, about them as though you were guiding a French person around London.

(2) Talk for several minutes about any topic of French life, eg school, food and drink, tourism. Questions will follow.

(3) In your own time read a longer book or novel; discuss it with your examiner.

(4) Write a longer essay (250 to 300 words) about any event which has occurred in the past. You may get help on this.

(5) Give the outlines of the day's main news in French. Don't forget the weather forecast.

(6) Listen to the day's new in French, once only. Make a brief résumé in English.

(7) Take a French newspaper and give an outline of the main items. Don't forget the weather!

(8) Act an an interpreter between a French person and an English person who will wish to ask questions of each other and generally exchange information.

Andrew Hellen, (Orwell School, Felixstowe), originally devised a Preliminary Level mainly to encourage those pupils who arrived at his school with no Primary School French behind them. Levels 1 and 2 are defined in communicative task items and also standard grammatical topics (eg -IR, -RE patterns in Level 2) as well as by lists of questions, conversational units (various standard expressions) and vocabulary. Later he used the Oxfordshire pattern to lay out his syllabus.

Finally we offer some extracts from syllabuses. Readers will appreciate that it is impossible to include all schemes, levels and languages, but we hope that this selection will allow readers to make some comparisons, and to identify features which they might wish to copy in producing syllabuses of their own.

NOTES

(1) See Modern Languages Examinations at 16+: a critical analysis, CILT, 1980.

(2) J L M Trim: Some possible lines of development of an overall structure for a European unit/credit scheme for foreign language learning by adults, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1978.

(3) B Russell: An enquiry into meaning and truth, Allen & Unwin, 1940.

(4) S Pit Corder: Introduction to applied linguistics, Penguin, 1973, p 27.

(5) See page

(6) Dell Hymes: On communicative competence (1966) Brumfit, C, and Johnson, K 1979, p 15 (see bibliography).

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(7) C Burstall: *Primary French in the balance*, NFER, 1974.

(8) D Wilkins: *Notional syllabuses*: OUP, 1976.

(9) These are the only grounds on which one can require the production of, for example, third person pronouns.

(10) For *Eclair* see: D Johnson 'ILEA Graded Tests Working Party - a Progress Report' Modern Languages in Scotland 19, February 1980.
For *Tour de France* see: Richard Johnstone: 'An interim outline of the *Tour de France* syllabus for first year classes', *Modern Languages in Scotland*, no 19, February 1980.

Northampton

I TRAVELLING BY BOAT AND TRAIN

SPEAKING

Où est le bateau pour ____, s'il vous plaît?

Un aller simple pour ____, s'il vous plaît.

Un aller-retour pour ____, s'il vous plaît.

C'est quel quai pour ____, s'il vous plaît?

Le train part pour/arrive à ____, s'il vous plaît?

Le bateau part pour/arrive à ____, s'il vous plaît?

Le prochain train pour ____ part à quelle heure, s'il vous plaît?

LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

à (+ time)

all full hours 1 - 12

à midi / à minuit
et demi(e) / et quart

moins le quart
all multiples of five
minutes both to and past the hour using a twelve hour clock

Quai numéro ____
Voie numéro ____

numbers 1 - 25

READING AND UNDERSTANDING

Billets
Eau potable

Eau non potable

Fumeurs
Non fumeurs

Accès aux quais
Renseignements

Départs
Arrivées

Voie numéro ____
quai numéro ____

LANCS/CUMBRIA

UNIT THREE: TRAVEL

Aim - To provide the basic linguistic skills and background information necessary for a person to travel independently by metro or bus if separated from their group.

Objectives

1. The learner should be able to ask the way to the bus stop and the metro station
2. The Bus - the learner should be able to:
   - (a) state destination
   - (b) ask the fare and understand the probable reply
   - (c) visually understand the 24 hour timetable
3. The Metro - the learner should be able to:
   - (a) buy a ticket or a book of tickets
   - (b) find the way to his/her destination including making changes necessary
   - (c) be able to read and understand the essential signs in the metro

Content

1. **SPEAKING**

Structures	Vocabulary
Où est-ce qu'il y a ......?	une station de métro un horaire un arrêt d'autobus la sortie le guichet
C'est combien? C'est directe? il faut changer? c'est sur quelle ligne? Je veux aller à	Main buildings and parts of the town as specified in UNIT TWO.

2. **LISTENING**

(Under this heading we require that all the structures and vocabulary in the speaking section plus the following be known.)

Structures	Vocabulary
Où exactement? Il faut changer à ...... Prenez la direction ...... Ou voulez-vous aller? Descendez à/ici	Numbers 1-100 Prices - francs/centimes

READING - The following words and terms should be read and understood by the learner:- Correspondance, sortie, entrée, billets, accès aux quais, horaire, ligne, direction, première/deuxième classe, métropolitain, banquette reservée, tarif, ticket, gare routière, arrêt d'autobus, départs, arrivées. guichet, défense de, renseignements, interdit.

INITIATING	RESPONDING
A4.6 MEAL TIME Guten Appetit	Guten Appetit
A4.7 ASKING FOR INFORMATION expecting YES/NO answer (Examples of Interrogative Forms to be used)	A4.8 RESPONDING TO YES/NO QUESTION
Kommst du aus Hamburg?	Ja
Du kommst aus Hamburg?	Nein
Du kommst aus Hamburg nicht wahr? L	Vielleicht
Gehst du heute abend nicht ins Kino? L	Doch
Kommt Klaus heute abend?	Ich weiß nicht
A4.9 ASKING FOR INFORMATION Using Question Words (Examples of Interrogative Forms to be used)	A4.10 RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS, with question words. Short forms.
Wo ist die Post?	Dort drüben
Wenn gehst du ins Bett ?	Um 10 Uhr
	Ich weiß nicht
A4.11 VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION (Examples of Statements)	A4.13 SHOWING UNDERSTANDING
Er ist in Hamburg	Ach so!
Er ist nicht in Hamburg	A4.14 QUESTIONING THE INFORMATION
	Wirklich?
	Stimmt das ?
	A4.15 GIVING CONTRARY INFORMATION
	Nein, er ist in Bonn.
	Doch
A4.12 VOLUNTEERING AN OPINION (Example)	A4.16 AGREEING
Ich glaube, er ist krank	Stimmt
	Das meine ich auch.

Specific Notions Key Forms	Examples of questions/requests	Examples of statements (only long forms will be given)
A6.1.2.6 PET ANIMALS		
Hund		
Katze		Ich habe eine Katze
Haustier		
Vogel O		Ich habe gern Vögel O
A6.1.2.7 GARDEN		
Garten	Arbeitest du oft im Garten?	Ich arbeite nicht gern im Garten
arbeiten		
A6.1.2.8 DAILY ROUTINES		
zur Schule gehen		Ich gehe nicht gern ins Bett
ins Bett gehen		
frühstücken	Trinkst du Kaffe zum Frühstück ?	
zum Frühstück		
zu Mittag essen		
zu Abend essen		
eine Tasse Tee trinken		
nach Hause gehen		
aufstehen	Wann stehst du auf?	Ich stehe um 8 uhr auf
A6.1.3	SCHOOL	
A6.1.3.1 NAME OF SCHOOL		
Name of school in English		
Gymnasium L		Ich gehe zu Leith Academy
Schule	Auf welche Schule gehst du?	
A6.1.3.2 PEOPLE IN SCHOOL		
Direktor L	Wie heißt der Direktor? L	Ich mag den Deutschlehrer nicht
Schüler		
Schülerin		
Lehrer	Wie heißt dein Deutschlehrer?	
Lehrerin		
A6.1.3.3. PLACES IN SCHOOL		
Klassenzimmer		
Labor L	Gehen wir ins Labor?	Er ist im Labor
Toiletten gehen		
hinausgehen	Darf ich hinausgehen.	

West Sussex Project

OUTLINE CONTENT - LEVEL I FRENCH

TOPIC-RELATED AREAS

Learners should be able to function orally and aurally in respect of the following topic-areas:

A. "Interpersonal Topics" (Personal identification and the communication of personal information.): pp. 3-5 inc.

A.1 Name
A.2 Age
A.3 Nationality
A.4 Place of origin
A.5 Family
A.6 Other people/friends
A.7 Domestic pets
A.8 House and home/daily routine
A.9 Free-time/interests/entertainments
A.10 Personal possessions.

B. "Survival topics" (Ability to cope in a French town - e.g. during a day visit in the following specified situations): pp. 6-9 inc.

B.1 Finding the way/understanding directions
B.2 Shopping. (Market/Supermarket/Gift-shop/"Boulangerie - Pâtisserie")
B.3 Café - food and drink
B.4 Essential services - Post Office
B.5 Expressing personal needs - toilet, medical, etc.

(Suggested language forms related to these topic-areas are set out later in this syllabus.)

FOUNDATION AREA

C. General functions of language

The learners will be able to use the foreign language to carry out the following (general) functions:

C.1 Making personal contact and getting things done (p.10)
C.2 Enquiring about and expressing feelings and attitudes (p.11)
C.3 Imparting and seeking factual information (pp. 11-12)

D. General notions

The learners will be able to handle the following (general) notions in the foreign language at a rudimentary level, especially as they relate to topic areas specified above: (pp. 13-18).

D.1 Expression of being/existence
D.2 Expression of possession
D.3 Expression of number/quantity
D.4 Expression of temporality
D.5 Spatial expressions
D.6 Expressions of weather
D.7 Qualitative/evaluative expression
D.8 Relational notions.

(The above functions and notions are categorised more fully, with suggested exponents in the appropriate sections of this syllabus. Taken together, they incorporate all the language forms derived from the topic-related areas and make up the "grammatical framework" for Level I French. See especially C.3/D.2-3/D.7-8.)

READING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

E. "Background Information" Topics (p.19)
F. Reading Syllabus: Level I (p.19)

LEXICAL CONTENT

G. Vocabulary "Headword" Index (p.20).

3

Materials Development and Methodology

MATERIALS

Most of the schemes started from the assumption that teachers would not be able to change their existing stocks or create new materials overnight, and that any syllabuses worked out would have to be appropriate for teachers using a wide range of materials. Some materials clearly lent themselves more readily to this exercise than others, and teachers attending a BALT Weekend Course on Alternative Types of Modern Language Examination, held at Urchfont Manor, Wiltshire, 14th to 16th April 1978 (and repeated at Cardiff in February 1979), compiled the following list of sources of material which might be useful in the preparation of graded testing and teaching items:

French Level 1

Books, courses, etc:	French Sign Language (Harrap) Destination France (Harrap) Eclair (Mary Glasgow Publications) Project France (Mary Glasgow Publications) Go to Boulogne/Calais (Longman) Passeport + Magazines (Mary Glasgow Publications) A Visit to France (Cassell) Chouette (E J Arnold) Close-up France I (Mary Glasgow Publications)
Radio:	Meet the French (BBC Schools)
Radio and TV:	Ensemble (BBC FE 'Beginners')
TV: BBC	Tout Compris (5 films available from BBC Enterprises, Villiers House, Ealing Broadway, London W5) Quatre Coins de la France (Aug 79: Dès le Début - 5 programmes made up of short modules teaching elementary functions/notions
ITV	The French Programme: La France telle qu'elle est + Comment dit-on? (For 5th & 6th forms: Au travail)

French Level 2

As for Level 1, plus the following suggestions:

TV: ITV	Bric-à-brac (Spring '79) (specifically for Level 2 work)
Books:	From A votre avis : 'What do I say now?', 'What do I say next?' (E J Arnold) Close-up France II (Mary Glasgow Publications)
Songs:	'Alors pourquoi?' LP cassette (Longman) Poems by Jacques Prévert (Livre de Poche) Le français dans le monde (Jan '78) The use of songs for teaching purposes is also discussed by Eric Hawkins in Teaching Languages (Ed. Edith Baer; BBC Publications)
Information pack	Vigeois (Longman)

German Levels 1 and 2

Books, courses etc:	Vorwärts (E J Arnold) German Sign Language (Harrap) Geradeaus/Immer weiter (E J Arnold) Deutsch 2000 (European Schoolbooks) Deutscher Sprachkurs (Biberswald; Unterwegs; Angekommen) (Heinemann)
TV/Radio:	Kontakte In Germany Da sind wir wieder
Filmstrips:	Life in Germany (Longman) Radiovision items from, eg, Deutsch für die Oberstufe, Da sind wir wieder (BBC)

For general reference

Visual Materials for the Language Teacher (Andrew Wright) (Longman)
Journals: AVLA Journal

Since this time, other useful materials have appeared, eg:

G J Bawcutt: Spanish Sign Language (Harrap)
D Ellis and M R Pearce: Destination France Part 3 (Harrap)
D Sanderson: Echanges (Harrap)
SGS Associates: Longman French Packs
G Taylor: Conversations, Situations (Longman)

Many of the teachers who were instrumental in founding schemes have worked out materials for themselves, but as more and more teachers became involved, a demand for materials specifically designed for graded objectives was felt. Oxfordshire responded with Entente Cordiale by Jean Ann Naylor and Ewen Bird, and Auf ins Rheinland by Jean Ann Naylor and John Lockyer, both published by Hodder & Stoughton. These books (which have accompanying tapes) are designed for groups working for Level 1, and present a story line in which Oxfordshire families spend holidays in France and Germany. The books are copiously illustrated and contain a great deal of interesting background material together with basic practical language. An interesting feature of these courses is that sixth-formers at two Oxfordshire schools were involved in the preparation of the materials.

The experience of the York Working Party of Teachers has led to the publication of Action! by Michael Buckby, (Nelson), a graded French course which will eventually have five stages. Stage 1 is therefore aimed at eleven-year-old beginners, whereas the OMLAC materials are aimed more particularly at third year pupils who are flagging on a more traditional diet. In Action!, the titles of units are expressed in functional terms:

Facts of French
Who's who, in French
French names
Your name and where you live
Meeting people
Hello and goodbye
Boulogne - a town in France
More places in Boulogne
Asking the way
Asking the way again
Understanding directions
Now you are there
Pets
You and your family
Say what you like
Say what you like to do
Say what you like best
Describing yourself
Describing other people
Going to a café
Paying for it
More to eat and drink
Going to the shops
Buying food
Buying more food
How much is it?
Buying presents and souvenirs
Where do you live?
Learn more about it

The materials for Stage 1 include a pupil's book, teacher's book, flash cards, and one cassette or tape. Stage 2 will be available in late 1980, and Stage 3 in 1981.

The Lothian group is co-operating with the Scottish Curriculum Development Service, Aberdeen, who are producing a new graded course for twelve- to fourteen-year-olds called Tour de France[1] (to be published by Heinemann in 1981). These materials are currently being piloted. They incorporate many of the ideas of the Lothian scheme, such as pupil profiling and self-assessment.

In the ILEA, the process has been reversed: the Eclair course, now marketed by Mary Glasgow Publications, was produced to meet the needs of the new comprehensive city schools, and only later was it decided to devise tests.

Eclair years 1 and 2 contains twelve units, each of which has colour slides, flashcards, poster, sound tape or cassette, pupil's workbook (expendable), teacher's guide, spirit duplicator master worksheets, films and videos. Year 3 (six units) has magazines, tapes or cassettes, core workcards, graded workcards, documentation cards, lesson-planning leaflet, teacher's guide. There are also talkcards published by the ILEA Learning Materials Service.

The best known courses based on functional principles are of course those of the BBC's continuing education programme: Ensemble, Kontakte, and ¡Digame!. This is not surprising, since it is much easier to analyse the reasons for an adult wanting to learn a language, and select appropriate language functions accordingly.

It is interesting to note that where a syllabus is conceived in functional rather than structural terms, it is possible to have one skeleton syllabus for all languages, and to devise courses which are to a large extent parallel. This may have useful implications for schools wishing to develop their own materials.

There can be no doubt that the most suitable materials for any group of learners are those worked out by the individual teacher with a specific class in mind. However, not all teachers are able or willing to give up the enormous amount of time involved, and there is clearly a demand for materials based on communicative principles with a realistic background element.[2]

METHODOLOGY

It is interesting to note that although the groups may define structures and vocabulary, notions and functions, tasks, topics, input and/or output syllabuses, none defines a methodology. Some of the materials associated with schemes (Eclair, Destination France) or that have arisen from them (Action!, Entente Cordiale) imply a methodology; these are a distinct minority. Of course, some instructional approaches are implicit in the syllabuses - one cannot aim at an assessment which includes large amounts of listening comprehension without specifically providing it in classroom teaching - but precisely how this is to be done is left to the teacher.

The reasons are probably historical. The 50's and 60's saw the great audio-visual and, to a lesser extent in this country, the audio-lingual revolutions which appeared to promise that a new method of teaching would solve our problem

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It was of course not to be, but a preoccupation with methods - how to present language to classes - ranging from a wholesale philosophy to a series of pragmatic techniques (classroom wrinkles), had continued to dominate teacher thinking and teacher training for a considerable period. Coupled with this was a growing awareness that 'new' methods did not seem always to have the desired effect on the wider ability range now learning a foreign language and, on the other hand, a realisation that 'old' methods in some hands still proved effective. The result has been a feeling that methods might perhaps not be so important after all. Wilkins sums this up:

> 'Language teaching is a pragmatic business and we should judge it accordingly. What works is good: what does not work is bad. Unfortunately, it is not at all easy to decide what does and what does not work, but at least we should be on our guard against importing a ready-made set of principles against which any piece of language teaching can be judged whatever the teaching situation. We know that in some cases, with certain pupils and with certain teachers, methods that we commonly castigate can be successful and conversely that methods that find general favour can fail.'[3]

The experience of groups is, however, showing that there is one aspect of methodology which has not yet been sufficiently explored. A lack of proper awareness that a communicative syllabus does imply a communicative way of teaching can lead to an exacerbation of the 'language-like behaviour' problem. If this is the case, the output syllabus (what is intended to be tested) is taken too baldly as an input syllabus (what the teacher conveys to pupils in the classroom) and the real communicative value of the experience can be reduced. A group from the Council of Europe Modern Language Project, visiting projects in the United Kingdom in Spring 1980, remarked particularly on the lack of a coherent methodology.[4]

While we should not want to suggest that particular lines should always be followed (this sort of approach has been tried with only limited success in the past), it should be said that the communicative approach common to all the syllabuses in the graded objectives schemes does imply a methodology which we should begin to define: there is a philosophy of teaching and learning involved.

NOTES

(1) See R Johnstone: 'An interim outline of the Tour de France syllabus for first-year classes' in *Modern Languages in Scotland* No 19, Feb 1980.

(2) Details of all teaching materials available in the United Kingdom for French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish are published in CILT: *Teaching Materials Lists*.

(3) D A Wilkins: *Second-language learning and teaching*, Edward Arnold 1974.

(4) R Bergentoft: report of visit to the United Kingdom of representatives of the Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe, May 1980.

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Testing

Teaching and testing are often uncomfortable bedfellows. Teachers may be trained to teach, but are rarely trained to test. They find themselves obliged to test in order to set pupils within a school year or in order to prepare pupils for public examinations. The type of test or examination all too often does not reflect what teachers aim to achieve in the classroom or would like pupils to be able to do in a proficiency examination. Yet periodic testing is so much a part of our educational system that all parties require achievement (or non-achievement) to be legitimised in a visible and tangible form. So long as the form is there, the system can function, whilst learners, teachers and parents are variously vindicated, assured or dismayed. It may well be a fundamental need to be able to measure one's achievement against some external measure. But if that measure is to have any credibility it must be seen by all concerned to be an integral part of the teaching/learning process, and to have validity.[1] It is these essential qualities which have so long been lacking in our testing of modern languages. Graded tests are going some way towards remedying this situation.

In all graded objectives schemes, testing plays an essential role. Some groups have expressed their teaching objectives in tests and subsequently produced syllabus definitions or materials. Others have concentrated first on the latter and then proceeded to create assessment models. Between the two are groups where syllabuses and tests have been developed hand-in-hand. This variety of approach is clearly seen in the search for a short but all-embracing way of referring to all such groups. Until comparatively recently it was a movement in search of a name: graded tests, graded exams, graded objectives, together with several acronyms (GREX, GOML, etc). If graded objectives is now preferred despite the extra two syllables, it is because this title encompasses the other two. Testing is not seen as the ultimate justification of the learner's achievement, nor as an evil necessary to the system. It has a positive, feed-back role but does not dominate the teaching/learning process. This balance is delicate and the importance given to testing varies between groups. There is, naturally, variation in different teachers' attitudes to its importance. Since the development of syllabuses and tests is a dynamic process rather than a fixed state, the work of some groups reveals changes of approach as experience has been gathered.

What, then, are the functions of graded tests for both learners and teachers? What are their advantages in terms of the learning process and the development of attitudes? How do the tests so far produced compare with our traditional patterns of testing?

Learners and teachers benefit jointly from many of the characteristics of these tests. Fundamentally, the tests are but a formalised extension of the goals and activities of the classroom. This is most clearly exemplified in the relationship between the ILEA tests and the Eclair materials, where the only difference between practice exercises and end-of-stage tests is the presence or absence of the teacher's assistance. The movement away from final tests to a model of continuous assessment in Lothian similarly indicates this unity of teaching and testing. All schemes demonstrate that the communicative tasks and areas taught in the classroom are ipso facto those to be tested. This means that the traditional element of fear of the unknown is removed from testing. All attempts to mystify or bamboozle are simply eliminated. Teachers are not anxious about tests set without reference to what and how they themselves taught, as in public examinations, learners are not thrust into a psychological role of inferiority by teachers trying to catch them out, as in many school examinations. The knowledge about what language tasks have to be performed at any level is totally explicit to both parties who can now work together in co-operation, not competition. The tests set out to show what learners can do, rather than what they cannot. Competition between learners is also excluded: the only competitive element is between the individual learner's motivation and the task to be accomplished. In public examinations learners are in competition with one another under a norm-referenced system where each individual is placed on a sliding scale of achievement. This system presupposes that it is inconceivable for Y not to be a little better than X and a little worse than Z. Coupled with this, for learners and teachers, is the prior knowledge that for every learner who is awarded a grade that is equated by employers as a 'pass', there will be approximately another learner who will 'fail'. It is similarly inconceivable in public examinations and many school examinations, that everyone can potentially 'pass'. Furthermore, every grade, mark or percentage in traditional examinations is, by definition, a greater or lesser degree of failure from some postulated (but rarely defined) satisfactory performance.

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Such concepts are alien to graded tests. Here the grading is between carefully-defined levels of performance, not between the performance of individuals. This is not to pretend that the performance of individuals does not vary; of course it does, but the details are unimportant. What matters is that individual learners can successfully carry out the tasks agreed in the syllabus. Within the levels that have been postulated by the various groups there are no degrees of failure: at most the outstanding performance of some learners is recognised. What is being carefully studied is how to perfect such a criterion-referenced system of assessment.[2] By what criteria do we deem a learner to have successfully carried out a certain task? The answer is by no means clear-cut: any definition must blend a clear statement of objectives, a hypothesis of what it is 'reasonable' to expect of a learner at a given stage, and trial testing of particular tasks which may initially use norm-referenced criteria as a guide.

Given that any language task may be carried out at varying degrees of linguistic complexity and accuracy, certain basic criteria of acceptability for a 'pass' have emerged, eg:

KNOWLEDGE: Can the learner identify a (simple) piece of information in the foreign language by reference to the mother tongue or visual cues?

COMMUNICATION:

Has the learner succeeded in passing a (simple) piece of information to a speaker of the foreign language so that it is correctly perceived by the recipient?

At the lower levels of performance which have so far been defined, learners' 'errors' of production or perception become irrelevant if the receiving and passing of messages is successful. As higher levels are developed, delicacy of choice and accuracy of expression will become more critical as communication is refined. But this degree of detail in evaluation is the tool of communication, not its master. Communicative competence and linguistic competence are not in competition, as often found in public examinations. As with the driving test, learners and teachers - and examiners - share the same knowledge about what the learner has to do to be judged competent. The route may vary, but the tasks remain the same. Learners are not in competition with one another and will not drive perfectly on the test run. All they have to do is to demonstrate their competence in performing the defined tasks.

Potentially 100 percent of the examinees could pass first time, and this is also true for graded language tests. There is no concept of a statistically-derived normal curve of performance: indeed the difficulty level of tests is derived from teachers' experience of what can 'reasonably' be achieved by a defined group of learners after convenient lengths of time.

Tests may therefore by taken when a group of learners or an individual learner is ready - and may be retaken by any 'failures' one or more times as the teacher thinks fit.

If learners work according to their teachers' expectations, given that these are 'reasonable', then success is more or less guaranteed. In practice very high success rates have been determined by different groups. The success rate naturally depends on the criteria laid down by the group: the higher the criteria, the lower the success rate. OMLAC has worked with the notion that the test difficulty should be such as to give a success rate of about 90 percent for its target group. The criterion in percentage terms is about 50. York by contrast has fixed a criterion of 70 percent and has achieved a pass rate of some 70 to 80 percent.

Practically and psychologically, learners are facing hurdles which are within their capabilities - by definition, otherwise the test is unsuitable or they should not have been entered for it. They know what they have to do to 'pass', that they have a good chance of doing so if they have worked 'reasonably', and can also retake the test should they fail. The test is thus supportive to learners, not a big stick. The more success they achieve, the more they are motivated to keep on trying, and to achieve further success. It is no cliché here that 'success breeds success'.

This approach can also help learners to take greater responsibility for their own learning, an educational spin-off which is just as important as any cognitive success. This interest in one's own learning, or motivation, is produced by several aspects of graded tests:

- they offer short-term goals
- they are seen to have valid objectives
- they can be geared to individual progress.

In contrast with the 'big bang', long term motivation of public examinations, which present a far-too-distant goal for the majority of learners, graded tests can be incorporated into any scheme of work to indicate way-stages. Such way-stages can occur after any length of time, provided the learner is prepared. Experience has shown success after periods varying from intensive weekends to one-year and two-year courses. It is clearly a more likely motivation for the majority of us to be asked to graduate from a width to a length to ten lengths of the swimming bath before attempting the Channel. And success encourages further effort. Most of us respond to limited success in controlled conditions, like the swimming bath or the language classroom. But we will most likely also want to try swimming in the sea at some point, and our controlled practice must therefore look forward to real-life situations in the future. If we can at least keep afloat and enjoy the experience, then we are likely to make the progress. We can only be helped to become more proficient if we have the motivation of success to want to do better. There is clearly a case for short-term language objectives and tests which reflect work done in the classroom, with all the implied constraints. But given that this language-like behaviour is a rehearsal for real language use at some future date, then the tasks set in the classroom should mirror this more long-distance goal. It has been established (by Lothian, for example) that school learners see their reasons for language learning in terms of realistic interaction with native speakers of the foreign language rather than in classroom terms, and it is this validity for the learner which is essential in all testing. Despite variations in emphasis, classroom teaching and testing, all groups have put this validity very high.

The work of the last two years has seen approaches to language learning move closer to individualised learning. Gradually we have come to realise that, though the teaching 'input' may be the same for all learners, individual 'output' may vary. Since a language task can be realised in a number of ways, from the simple to the complex, levels of assessment can and have been pegged to increasingly complex handling of the same core of tasks. Potentially, then, if we can refine and manage our teaching methodology appropriately, a group of learners may be working on the same core of language tasks but with a range of language exponents which correspond to the individual's needs and progress. It is possible therefore for learners within the same group to take graded tests of different levels of difficulty over a given period, thus approaching the ideal of individualised learning in the classroom.

Though the teacher is left to select appropriate materials and methodology, graded tests have clear benefits for the individual teacher. Tests in use in several groups have been devised with the participation of many teachers before being trial tested and revised where necessary. This means that teachers - from all participating schools in the York project - can use their joint experience to produce tests which are more polished than tests produced by one or two teachers in a single school. The chances are that tests gain in every respect - in validity as well as reliability, and teachers have that faith in the assessment procedure which should have been realised in CSE. As more teachers are drawn in, the pool of teacher expertise is increased, and the estrangement of teaching and testing can slowly be reconciled. In other groups, such as OMLAC, teachers outside the school classroom have been able to develop new ideas and impart these to other teachers in the area. Hence there is the opportunity for in-service training which is motivated - for the teacher this time - by a desire to be responsible for a vital part of a graded objectives scheme.

Learner motivation has also been encouraged in most groups by the award of a certificate to mark the successful completion of a level or stage. The certificate may be relatively plain (eg OMLAC) and carry only the name of the scheme of the school, of the learner and of the person certifying the award, such as the local Chief Education Officer, together with the language and level. Other certificates may be more elaborate and define what the learner can do at the time of the award, eg York, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, Lothian.

Though such certificates are not vital to the success of the various projects, it is clear that they are welcomed by teachers and learners alike, in that they are a tangible record of success. Many school pupils also receive similar certificates for gymnastics, swimming, cycling, piano playing, etc, and are pleased to add evidence of language skills to their personal records of achievements. Adults, too, are not averse to the receipt of certificates in similar areas. As with all but the highest grades of such examinations individual certificates are unlikely to have a surrender value, outside the particular scheme. Teachers not working in the groups which exist at present are often worried by this fact. But the evidence from within such groups is that there is in practice no problem here. The tests and certificates are records of achievement, rather than of proficiency, and as such are not intended for use by employers, etc.

The graded tests and certificates have justified their role in graded objectives schemes. Let us now turn to a closer review of the type of tests and levels of achievement which have been defined so far.

Groups have devised levels of achievement which are related cumulatively. Not surprisingly there have been most candidates at the first level in each case and it is here that most experience has been gained. These levels are arbitrary and are not consistent between groups, though there is, subjectively, a large measure of overlap. Clearly where syllabuses vary markedly in their definition, as between, for example, ILEA, Lothian and OMLAC, then quantitative and qualitative comparisons are inappropriate.

What defines a particular group's levels is generally the blend of a 'slice' of syllabus together with test items which reflect the tasks implied. Though levels are not tied to fixed teaching courses, in terms of time, course materials (with the exception of ILEA) or ability of learners, in certain groups the early levels have been devised so that particular groups of pupils could achieve a successful standard. In the case of York and OMLAC, experimental groups have consisted largely of less able pupils with two or more years of school learning. Subsequently, abler learners have been set the same objectives and tests, sometimes over shorter periods. By retaining the same pass level, the original target groups have not been forced into an inferior position through competition from abler learners. As higher levels are devised it seems probable that satisfactory achievement will be tied to the assumed or/and proven capabilities of learners normally entered for CSE/GCE examinations, eg York. However, whereas CSE Grade 4 is defined as the performance of the average fifth-form pupil, a parallel graded examination is defined in positive terms, rather than as a failure to perform at the highest level postulated by the examination, ie to get a Grade 1.

All groups, except for Lothian, award certificates on the basis of final (summative) tests only. (Lothian allocates two-thirds of possible marks to Waystage (formative) tests, set by the school. Further details are given below.) These final tests sample the testing syllabus and reflect the varying importance given to the language skills and background knowledge, as specified in the aims and syllabus of each group. Generally the tests give most weight to comprehension, particularly of the spoken language, with a quarter to a third of marks allocated to speaking tests. Where background has been a specific area of learning, eg ILEA, then this is tested separately. Learners are only asked to write in the foreign language at higher levels (generally Level 3 or above) and even there the tasks are highly structured and specific.

This balance of skills reflects two important findings in the teaching of foreign languages in the early stages. Firstly, it is a well known experience that all learners rapidly develop a wide comprehension of the language, whereas their ability to produce it is much more limited, particularly as far as the written language is concerned. This normal psychological progression is further exaggerated by the reluctance of many teachers to reward written or even spoken production on the basis of successful communication. All too often only the formal aspects (spelling, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy) are marked - and then on a negative basis. Concentration on comprehension also reflects the needs of beginning learners in a foreign setting: they are at least likely to have to write in the foreign language and will need to understand much more spoken language than they will need to speak. These priorities will gradually become less marked with increasing knowledge, confidence and prolonged meetings with speakers of the foreign language.

The second, practical reason for the present balance of skills is our relative (dis)satisfaction with methods of testing comprehension and oral production. Whereas we have considerable experience in various types of comprehension testing and can produce relatively valid and reliable tests, satisfactory oral tests are much less easy to devise and administer. Oral tests demand a great amount of time on a one-to-one basis; they impose a strain on the learners who may not do themselves justice in a five-minute final test; and they require testing skill of the teacher who has to conduct and mark them. However, they are utterly vital if the tests are to retain their credibility. It is only in the oral tests that any real interaction takes place between teacher and learner, or learner and learner. However technically refined our comprehension tests, they only reflect one side of the communication process, and one much further away from reality. If our tests are to show the learner's language ability, as opposed to language-like behaviour, then we must persevere in our attempts to perfect tests which will demonstrate this. Lothian's use of interim oral tests throughout the learning-period may well point in a very useful direction.

Comprehension tests

As would be expected, none of the groups expect learners to answer questions in the foreign language, since this would badly distort their ability to understand and indicate their understanding. It is also widely assumed that they would wish or need to relate their understanding to their mother tongue on many occasions - to interpret for other people for example, who do not understand the language in question. The majority of tests therefore use multiple-choice items in which no production at all is required. Typically, a snatch heard in the foreign language would be followed by three or four options in English. If a question is asked about a notice or a letter in the foreign language, again English options would follow. Many items ask learners to anticipate, for example, the sign they might see. Here, naturally, the options appear in the foreign language. It is refreshing to see that most items are free from the deliberate pitfalls and puns so beloved of 'O' level and CSE setters. The items attempt to test a wide range of material as fairly as possible and all the options, in both languages, must be plausible possibilities in each context. In many cases, and particularly in OMLAC, the tests follow a series of situations or a 'story-line' which helps to give reality and to relate the tests to teaching activities.

Where an answer requires figures (time, money, etc) it is probably fairer and more realistic to ask the learner to write the answer down, rather than to decide between four options which only serve to confuse. Some groups (eg York) mix multiple-choice and open-ended questions, requiring only a short answer in English, which can be easily completed by the learners and easily marked by the teachers. Complex answers in English would clearly not be suitable for less able groups or early-level students. Tests of reading and listening comprehension are usually kept separate, but in the OMLAC tests they are combined, as in a real situation. Where visual symbols are well known, as in the ILEA tests based on Eclair, items based on a choice of symbols are appropriate. Other visual materials, such as menus, town plans, diaries, etc have also been used by many groups. In later stages, more demanding questions in English or a reply in English to a letter in the foreign language are also included (Lothian).

The test items have been compiled by members of the working parties, who may all be teaching towards the particular level or/and training teachers. Where 'expert' help has been given during the early years of the project (eg OMLAC), teachers are now gradually taking over the function of test-writing, following in-service training courses. After the pooling of items from a number of teachers, meetings are held to select or revise material before it is used, either for a 'real' test or in a pre-test or pilot examination. Where material has been used unpretested (eg OMLAC), the results are subsequently published to show the relative difficulty and suitability of items. As sufficient pretested material becomes available, groups are moving towards the publication of standardised forms of test, which will be available for teachers to administer at any time they find convenient (OMLAC, ILEA, York).

The comprehension tests are designed so that they can be taken during a normal single period, thus avoiding timetabling problems in school. Learners cannot be expected to concentrate for more than about half an hour at a time, and testing of about an hour in total should adequately sample the syllabus. Tests of listening comprehension may be taped in advance by native speakers (ILEA, York) or listening items read aloud by the teacher (OMLAC). Generally, every consideration is given to learners who have difficulty in reading their mother tongue: the items are read aloud in many cases so that the learners' knowledge of the foreign language may not be concealed by poor reading skills.

Teachers are normally responsible for marking the comprehension tests and sending learners' answer sheets and total marks in to a co-ordinator for checking and grading. If mark schemes need to be discussed, this is generally carried out before the tests are given. Most groups have decided beforehand that learners must obtain a given score (eg ILEA, York) or that a given approximate percentage are expected to pass (OMLAC) or both (Lothian). No standards fixing as such is therefore needed, though participating teachers need to see the results in experimental situations.

Oral tests

There is less satisfaction - and therefore most experimentation - with oral tests. Lothian has decided that learners should complete a checklist of oral tasks during the course as well as taking part in a conversation with the teacher and a fellow-pupil in the final test. Most groups have persevered with a final test lasting two to seven minutes between pupil and teacher. Questions are generally of two kinds: the learner is asked a number of direct, personal questions and also has to take part in a number of role-playing situations. These situations may be cued by visual material - pictures, drawings, symbols, signs - or by English instructions. Special attention is given to the learners in the active role where they must take the initiative in asking for services, directions, information, etc. OMLAC has also experimented with visuals inviting a comment or reaction in a clearly defined situation.

Though most teachers use visual material during the course, it is difficult to devise testing materials which are easily understood by all learners, since course materials are varied. Only in the case of Eclair (ILEA) can the same visuals be used. It is also particularly difficult for less able pupils to adjust to a situation where the teacher suddenly does not help or prompt as in class. Thus the performance standard in a final test may be unrepresentative of a pupil's work during the year. Continuous assessment and a pupil profile may be the answer here (Lothian), though much more work and record keeping is required of the teacher.

Oral tests require much time. Some teachers can arrange for space on an examination timetable or for a colleague to cover, so that testing can take place in class time. Otherwise tests have to take place in breaks, lunch hours or after school. Teachers generally mark as they go along, but more careful scrutiny and feedback on the tests is achieved by systematic recording of all learners (York). This also helps to improve standards, since teachers become more aware of potential or required standards of performance.

Results

It is generally felt that learners should know as soon as possible whether or not they have passed. As tests become more standardised, teachers themselves know the pass mark and can award certificates immediately. In many cases the head teacher presents the certificates at a school assembly. This immediate feedback has been found to have a considerable motivating effect on learners, who are often encouraged to carry on learning a foreign language when they would otherwise have dropped the subject. As the necessity to compile new tests recedes, so teachers can offer the tests, more than once if necessary, at any convenient time in the year.

ILEA

Tests based on the first six units (Year 1) of Eclair have now been produced by the ILEA Learning Materials Service and printed by Mary Glasgow Publications. This is the first of three sets of tests devised by a working party of teachers based at the Modern Language Centre. Level 2 tests will be pretested in 1980 for availability in 1981, with Level 3 tests following a year later.

There are four separate tests at each level, all of which sample only the vocabulary and structures in the teaching materials: these cover listening, reading, Francescope (background studies) and speaking. The first three are tested by multiple-choice questions and no production of English or French is required; the pass mark for each is 14 out of 30. In the speaking test the pass mark is 18 out of 40, with credit for those achieving 36 and over. It is expected that, in ILEA as a whole, ninety percent of pupils entered will pass and that ten percent will pass with credit in the oral.

The tests include 'only those language objectives which relate to the pupils' genuine communicative needs' and are criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced. Teachers can, with such pretested and standardised tests, give them to pupils at any appropriate time when the first six units of the course have been completed.

The listening test comprises 30 items, each with visual cues, based on a tape recording. The pupils are given various situations (in the street, in the market, in the café) and have to indicate which visual illustrates the content of the information given by the person speaking.

The reading test (30 items) samples a further three topics: around the town (reading signs, notices and travel posters); food and drinks (reading signs and notices relating to food and a café menu); and a French comic (reading a comic strip based on a first person narrative of the adventures of PMF). Here some of the choices are between visuals, others between written options. 'France-scope' is divided into four themes: going to France, around the town, shops and cafés and life in France. The questions are again in a multiple-choice format, helped by visuals.

The speaking test examines the learner's ability to perform four language functions: asking for factual information; asking for things; answering questions about intention and giving information about self. It covers four situations: around the town; at the market; in the café; and in an interview. Within each there are fifteen 'communicative tasks' each of which is prompted in English, together with some visuals. The tests are to be recorded and the pupils told 48 hours in advance of the general situations they will need to know. Teachers are given general advice about prompting pupils, together with an anticipated script where necessary: a marking scheme is given: 2 marks for performing the task without error; 1 mark for effective performance containing an error. Examples of errors include incorrect structure or intonation. A further table is given for an overall assessment (out of 10) for accent/intonation/fluency.

The tests appear to reflect the aims of Eclair very accurately, but clearly could not be used with any other preparation. The visual symbols alone are not comprehensible to non-Eclair students. It would have been interesting to have some basic details concerning the statistical performance of the objective items, and more information on the errors made in the oral test. As is rightly stated in the Teacher's Guide, the levels of the tests should not be compared with any other project. It might be observed, however, that the demands made on learners are probably less than with the tests from other project groups.

LOTHIAN

This project may be regarded as the most advanced experiment currently taking place, in terms of both syllabus and testing. Its prime author regards the tests as being in a state of continuous experimentation - those for 1981 may well vary from the 1980 materials. It incorporates a three-fold form of evaluation:

1. A diagnostic test of communicative functions and forms. All learners have a Progress Card, on which are marked various language activities. These are ticked off as they are mastered, giving visible signs of success to

the learner, and feedback to the learner and the teacher which will assist in the planning of future work.

2. Waystage tests, devised by the teacher and covering listening, reading, conversation, writing (Level 3 upwards) and a project (Level 4 upwards). These tests, based on continuous assessment, add to the formative assessment begun in the diagnostic testing and count for two-thirds of the marks at any level.

3. Stage tests, counting for one-third of final marks, and acting as summative surrender-value tests. These will provide a 'dipstick' to assess the learner's ability to cope with authentic language use on a wider basis than in the earlier tests.

Information from all three types of testing will be entered on a Regional Record of Achievement in Modern Languages, which will accompany the learner through secondary school and be available to employers, etc.

Tests have been devised at four stages for the five continental languages taught in schools. Stages 1 and 2, and 3 and 4 go together and are mostly based on the same textual material, with harder questions, a harder paper and a higher level of performance required at the upper level in each case.

Stages 1 and 2 include a sequence of listening and reading items, with multiple-choice and open-ended questions; a letter from a penfriend in the foreign language, with questions in English leading to a reply in English, open-ended questions on recorded conversations; open-ended questions on short, authentic reading items (Stage 2 only). Stages 3 and 4 include reading activities similar to earlier stages; reading for pleasure (also included in Stage 2); a letter in the foreign language based on an authentic letter; a note to a friend (Stage 4 only); listening activities as in earlier stages; and media items for listening testing (Stage 4 only).

The oral tests will be of two kinds at each stage: transactional tasks and interactional tasks. In the first test the learner has to obtain something from - and exchange information with - the teacher, who plays the part of a foreigner. In the second test two pupils exchange information and opinions. The basic criterion for success is based on the extent to which the learner has understood and communicated. From this an appropriate level of performance is determined (LOP) by the teachers concerned.

The paper-and-pencil tests are designed to take a total of 1 to 1½ hours at Stage 1, rising to 2 hours approximately at Stage 4. In addition the oral tests take a total of 8 minutes. To pass, pupils must obtain a score of 70 percent. Pupils who score 85 percent and above obtain a credit.

A sample of the criteria for assessment is as follows:

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE 3

COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY

Stage 2 85% understood/communicated. Copes very well with the Functions of the Stage 2 syllabus.

Stages 3/4 70% understood/communicated. Copes with the Functions of the Stage 3 syllabus.

RANGE OF STRUCTURES

L. Can cope with the range of items in the Stage 3 syllabus but is 'thrown' by items beyond this.

S. Beginning to use structures creatively. Relies less on set phrases for everything. Has reasonable mastery of Stage 3 vocabulary and phrases.

GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY AND APPROPRIACY

Fairly accurate on Stage 1/2 items, but somewhat inaccurate beyond this. Uses reasonably appropriate language.

PRONUNCIATION

Intelligible. Beginning to master more awkward sounds. Rhythm, stress and intonation fair.

HESITANCE/SPEED

L. Less repetition asked for. Can cope with near native speech in known situations.

S. Less hesitant, but may be a bit slow.

LENGTH OF UTTERANCE

L. Copes with combined sentences in short utterances.

S. Beginning to combine sentences, but vast majority will be one-sentence utterances.

LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE 4

COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY

Stage 3 85% understood and communicated. Copes very well with Functions of the Stage 3 syllabus.

Stage 4 70% understood/communicated. Copes with the Functions of the Stage 4 syllabus.

RANGE OF STRUCTURES

L. Can cope with the range of items in the Stage 4 syllabus.

S. Uses structures creatively to convey meaning. Has reasonable mastery of Stage 4 vocabulary and phrases.

GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY AND APPROPRIACY

Fairly accurate on Stage 1/2/3 items, but somewhat inaccurate beyond this. Uses reasonably appropriate language:

PRONUNCIATION

Intelligible. Beginning to master more awkward sounds. Rhythm, stress and intonation quite good.

HESITANCY/SPEED

L. Occasional repetition asked for. Can cope with near native speech in a fair range of situations.

S. Beginning to show confidence. Less slow, less hesitant.

LENGTH OF UTTERANCE

L. Copes with combined sentences in short utterances.

S. Combining two sentences quite effectively.

The Stage tests are weighed as follows:

STAGE TESTS: ALLOCATION OF MARKS/LOP'S

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Sequence	20	20	-	-
Letter	10	10	-	-
Listening activities	10	10	15	25
Reading activiities	-	20	25	30
Writing activities	-	-	10	15
TOTAL Paper & Pencil Test marks	40	60	50	70
Conversation tests PASS LOP	LOP 1	LOP 2	LOP 3	LOP 4
Conversation tests CREDIT LOP	LOP 2	LOP 3	LOP 4	LOP 5

The marks for the Waystage tests (= Profile marks) and the Stage tests are related as follows: the profile marks count for 2/3 of the total marks and the Stage Test results for 1/3 of the total.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Total Profile marks	80	80	100	140
Total Stage Test marks Paper & Pencil tests	40	60	50	70
TOTAL	120	140	150	210
PASS MARK	84	98	105	147
CREDIT MARK	102	119	127	178
Stage Test Conversation LOP - Pass	LOP 1	LOP 2	LOP 3	LOP 4
Stage Test Conversation LOP - Credit	LOP 2	LOP 3	LOP 4	LOP 5

Thus a Stage 2 pupil, for example, who scores more than 98 as a total of Profile and Stage Test marks and who gets a LOP of 2 on his Stage Test Conversation will obtain a PASS.

A Stage 2 pupil scoring a total mark of more than 119 and getting a LOP of 3 on his Stage Test Conversation will obtain a CREDIT.

OMLAC

The tests for 1977, the first year tests were administered, were published in New Objectives in Modern Language Teaching (Hodder & Stoughton, 1978). The tests for 1978 are expected to be published in 1981, followed by those for 1979. Each year has seen an increase in the languages and levels offered and the numbers of pupils entered:

ENTRIES FOR THE OMLAC TESTS

		1977	1978	1979
Schools entering candidates		17	31	42*
Candidates:	French Level 1	1000+	2022	3174
	French Level 2	400+	1176	2060
	German Level 1	200-	524	578
	German Level 2	-	199**	217
	Italian Level 1	-	-	155**
	Spanish Level 1	-	-	279**
	Russian Level 1	-	-	35**

* This year, only 15 of our 57 schools (and most of them Middle Schools which for obvious reasons are less likely to be involved) are not entering candidates.

**Tests available for the first time.

Syllabus and tests for French Level 3 will be piloted in 1980/81, to be followed by parallel tests in German. It is also intended to publish early in 1981 standardised comprehension tests for French and German Level 1, which will include the most satisfactory items pretested in 1977-9. These tests will be criterion-referenced, and will form the 1980 tests in Oxfordshire.

At both levels tested so far, the learners are required to carry out objective tests of listening and reading comprhension (combined) and speaking tests, weighted in the ratio 80:20. The comprehension tests have proved very satisfactory and have been used as a basic type for other groups. At each level this test consists of two 'sequences' of twenty items which can be administered in about 25 minutes.

The 'sequences' are read aloud to the pupils by the teacher in normal classroom conditions, so that those unable to read English fluently are not penalised. Teachers are now responsible for setting the tests, after the lead given by members of the working party from Higher Education. Teachers are also responsible for scoring these tests and the oral performance.

The items follow a story line which includes a number of situations, requiring various blends of listening and reading skills, in a 2:1 ratio. Each situation and item is preceded by an English statement of the context and the task. The items include a large percentage of English, with the listening material, notices, signs, menus, maps, etc being given in the foreign language. Most of the items are four-option multiple-choice, with a scatter of varied matching tasks. At Level 1, the learner is expected to act as translator for parents who do not know the language; at Level 2 (s)he is a visitor to a family in the foreign country.

The oral tests are designed to take about five minutes per pupil. At Level 1, the tests require the learner to ask questions and give instructions about directions and places and to take part in two-role playing situations based on transactional and personal language. At Level 2 (s)he must imagine what various people in different situations might be saying. There is no predetermined answer here, and all reasonable responses are accepted. Teachers are asked to record a sample of the orals for feedback purposes.

It is expected that about 90 percent of pupils entered will pass at each level, with samples restricted for standards-fixing purposes to the bottom 25 percent (Level 1) or bottom 50 percent (Level 2) of pupils entered. This information is provided by teachers and prevents abler pupils who are entered from forcing up the standard. The best performances are also awarded a credit on the certificate. This procedure has produced a pass mark of about 50 percent, though the mark for the comprehension tests alone is 70 to 80 percent.

It is remarkable that such a complexity of tests can be produced and organised without a full-time team. Much credit is due to the co-operation of agencies and individuals outside the classroom: team members from two universities, one of which provides computer analysis; Oxfordshire county printers and an indefatigable Curriculum Development Leader.

YORK

The York teachers' group started work in French in 1976 and was, with the OMLAC group, the first to produce tests. These were administered for the first time in 1977 at Level 2, to be followed in 1978 by Level 3, and in 1979 by

Levels 1 and 4. (Level 4 is also approved as a Mode 3 CSE examination.)

The group has remained small - some ten schools - enabling the members to have very full control over the setting and marking of tests. These have several features of particular interest, not shared by other tests. They are not based on a written defined syllabus of language items or objectives: the questions set represent the teachers' aims and actual classroom practice and have to be acceptable to all in the group. No pass rates are specified, as with ILEA or OMLAC, for example: learners have to reach a performance standard of 70 percent of total marks. The Listening and Understanding tests are recorded by native speakers, and the Oral tests are recorded by the teachers for marking and moderation.

All levels include tests of Listening and Understanding, Reading and Understanding, and Speaking; Writing is added at Level 4. At all levels the situations selected reflect realistic personal and tourist interchanges which would occur with French people. Successive levels show an increase of language items to be mastered and level of difficulty, with the material for one level being subsumed in the level above: Levels 1 to 3 provide for 30 minutes paper-and-pencil tests, with longer tests at Level 4.

The tests comprise the following items:

Reading and Understanding: 30 to 50 minutes, 30 to 45 percent. Multiple-choice questions based on survival situations, together with questions on a personal letter and short narrative passage.

Listening and Understanding: 30 to 45 minutes, 25 to 40 percent multiple-choice or short-answer questions in English, based on short dialogues of tourist and personal interest.

Oral: two to ten minutes approximately, 20 to 30 percent. Role-playing situations from a tourist context, together with personal questions, and, at Level 3, questions on a picture.

Writing: 30 minutes, 15 percent (Level 4 only). A short story of 100 to 115 words based on pictures related to themes prescribed for the oral test.

In the school context different pupils may be taking tests at different levels at the end of any year, depending on their progress. This is made possible since the overall syllabus is cumulative and the test items similar in style. The tests have also been used successfully with evening class learners.

The German working party, with three participating schools, began work in 1978 and administered the first tests in 1979. As in the French tests, three skill areas were tested in this 'Waystage' level. Reading Comprehension (25 percent) is tested by objective questions in German and open-ended questions in English, based on short passages and a letter. For Listening Comprehension (40 percent) the student listens to a number of taped passages in German, followed either by true/false statements or open-ended questions, both in English. The Oral test comprises two role-plays and personal questions of varying difficulty. Much thought has gone into recording and standardising oral tests. Details are given of the type of errors which can be tolerated without penalty, together with a clear, positive marking scheme as follows:

- Correct response, appropriate to the situation, no ambiguity, no offence to native speaker's ear; wrong gender or case acceptable, unless ambiguity or a problem of communication caused thereby - four marks
- Adequate response, appropriate to the situation, allowing communication with no ambiguity but causing slight offence to native speaker's ear, or with minor error, such as a wrong verb ending, where the subject is clear - two to three marks
- Appropriate response, indicating question understood, but with serious inaccuracy, causing difficulty for native speaker's immediate comprehension - one mark
- Inappropriate response; failure to communicate the necessary information - no marks.

Relations with public examinations

At the time of writing (Spring 1980) two examination boards are actively engaged in graded examinations schemes. These are (1) The Yorkshire Regional Examination Board and (2) The East Midlands Regional Examination Board. Further details of their work are given at the end of this article, in Annexe 1 and Annexe 2 respectively.

Several examinations boards show a clear and sympathetic interest in the schemes on an informal level. Four were represented at the CILT GOML conference in April 1979, where they served on a working party on the relationship of sixteen-plus examinations and graded tests. (See Appendix II.) The suggestion then made for setting up a meeting with representatives from examinations boards was not followed up because of the uncertainty over the future of the sixteen-plus examination system. Now that new proposals for reform are again being considered, such a meeting may well have a useful part to play. It is certainly true that the present official concern with criterion-referenced graded levels for the new form of examination could, if they are interpreted aright, be very much in the spirit of the graded objectives system.

ANNEXE 1

(1) The Yorkshire Regional Examination Board

The Yorkshire Working Party reports that Level 4 of the York Area French Proficiency Tests was first administered in Summer 1979, and was, for the majority of candidates, a CSE Mode 3 examination, submitted by the group of schools concerned and administered by the Yorkshire Regional Examinations Board.

The initial proposal for the examination had been submitted to the YREB in 1977 (including, in accordance with the Board's requirements, proposed aims of the examination, testing syllabus, details of testing techniques envisaged, a specimen examination paper and a detailed marking scheme). The proposed examination had been accepted as appropriate for the award of a full range of CSE grades, though the Board's moderator had helpfully suggested ways in which a section of the listening comprehension paper might be modified to facilitate administration of the test.

In 1979, the numbers taking the test as a CSE examination were limited: 74 candidates. Nevertheless, the fact that these candidates were from four different examination centres meant that a number of standardisation meetings was essential: an oral agreement trial/standardisation meeting; a written paper agreement trial/standardisation meeting; and a final standardisation meeting, at which the recommended grade boundaries were also agreed upon, for submission, together with all tapes, scripts and mark sheets, to the Board's Moderator. The meetings were fitted into the framework of after-school working meetings normally held by members of the York schools graded tests group.

At all times, the Examinations Board, and in particular, its Moderator, were most helpful and understanding, and the Moderator's report on the examination was read with interest by members of the group.

But why a CSE?

There were, however, a number of other candidates for the Level 4 test who, in view of their age, were not eligible to take the test as a CSE examination, and for whom it was simply 'Level 4' of the York Area graded tests. This serves to emphasise the real origin of the Level 4. Level 4 was envisaged initially, not as a CSE examination, but as an integral part of a structure of tests available at different levels, each one self-contained and justifiable in itself in terms of content, yet providing a firm basis for progression to the next stage, with attainment of it being, if possible, an incentive to continue. Indeed, it was the fact that, back in 1977, teachers of groups then involved in Level 2 of the French Proficiency tests, detecting a more favourable attitude on the part of pupils toward language learning, were concerned to plan for a possible increase in numbers of students wishing to continue foreign language study in school 'option' schemes, that gave added urgency to the production of the Level 3 and Level 4 tests.

Whilst some pupils might well reach (and indeed have reached) Level 4 before the age of sixteen-plus, the idea arose of constructing a Level 4 test which might also be submitted as a proposed CSE Mode 3 examination, for those pupils taking the test in their final year in secondary school and looking for some nationally recognised examination qualification. After all, one reason (amongst many others) for continuing the graded tests beyond the early levels was the hope that the existence of a structure of higher levels would keep the door open for further study for those many pupils who might otherwise have felt themselves to have been 'written off' at too early an age simply because, at that stage, the conventional sixteen-plus examinations appeared to be out of their reach.

Graded test or CSE?

However, this attempt at a point of correspondence with the existing examination structure is clearly not without its problems. There is a basic difference between the conception of graded tests, with their emphasis on criterion referencing (and a more clear-cut view of the achievement/non-achievement line) and that of the public examinations, based on norm-referencing. Level 1 or Level 2 of the York Area graded tests, for example, was never designed to discriminate finely between candidates, in the sense of producing a wide distribution of marks for comparative purposes. It was designed to provide clearly defined objectives which are realistically attainable - and, when a candidate is ready to take the test, it is normally expected that he should achieve these objectives: the test will reveal whether he has or has not.

In constructing a test that was also to serve as a CSE Mode 3, the group accepted that a certain compromise was inevitable. Working within the CSE system, the members of the group naturally accepted the obligation to meet the requirements of that system. Nevertheless, there remained the hope that, if the aims of the examination were in sympathy with the sort of objectives set in previous 'levels', candidates would show that they had successfully achieved these objectives. The relatively high marks gained in most of the tests and in the examination as a whole, which appear to warrant slightly anxious comment from the Board, were, in fact, very welcome to the members of the group. Whilst we recognised the need for better discrimination in future listening tests, we were pleased that, whilst allowing satisfactory discrimination in most parts of the examination, the spread of marks has 'moved up' the mark scale. We were at pains to aim at a statement of positive attainment and steer clear of the idea of what has rather mischievously been called a 'certificate of failure' - the setting of a standard, against which degrees of failure can be measured.

However, it would be nice to think that one day the CSE/GCE system might allow for a whole structure of (criterion-based) graded tests or 'Levels', (Level 1, Level 2, etc), which might be taken at any point in a candidate's studies, with the award of an appropriate CSE/GCE grade for attainment of that particular 'Level' - a grade which would be 'bettered' by later attainment of higher 'Levels'. In the meantime, we have been most grateful for the Board's co-operation and advice, and to know that the 1979 'examination would appear to suggest that this level of the Graded Examination and CSE are not incompatible' (Moderator's report) and that 'in general... the tests seemed to have worked well and to have produced no major problems of moderation' (extract from Comments from the Board's staff).

ANNEXE 2

(2) The East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study

In 1978 the Languages Regional Subject Panel of the East Midlands Regional Examination Board requested the Development Sub-Committee to set us a working party on graded assessment procedures in modern languages. The principal reason for the panel's interest was the dissatisfaction expressed by teachers at subject panel meetings with current modes of assessment at CSE and GCE which fail to provide positive statements of attainment for the candidates examined.

The working party which was set up carried out a survey of schools from which it became apparent that a project in graded assessment would arouse widespread interest.

In November 1979, Dr Roy Dunning of the University of Leicester School of Education was asked to co-ordinate a study in the region to assess the feasibility of defining ability in performance terms for a series of levels of attainment in the secondary school, suitable initially across the whole range of ability to be accredited by

EMREB. It was decided to work towards a certificated Level 1 in French available to schools from September 1981. The study will be validated by Dr Elaine S Freedman, Research Fellow at the University of Leicester School of Education.

The feasibility study focuses on the establishment of communication in French as both the aim and process of learning in the classroom. The basis for the assessment syllabus is J van Ek's Threshold Level for modern language learning in schools.

Level 1 will consist of 5 Units:

(1) Personal identification; (2) House and home;
(3) Life at home; (4) Food and drink; (5) Shopping.

Each of the units will be continuously assessed in two modes:

(1) Talking; (2) Reading/Writing.

There will be a summative test at the end of the five units sampling the learning involved.

It is assumed that talking, reading and writing are interdependent at this level. Talking is the principal mode; Reading/Writing function in a supportive role. As the study has to do with the whole range of ability, it is further assumed that Talking will be accessible to a wider ability range than Reading/Writing. A candidate will be able to achieve Level 1 in Talking alone or in Talking/Reading/Writing together.

For the period of the Feasibility Study only, the Levels will be linked with the years of the secondary school course, thus:

Level 1 = Year 1 (ie 11+)
Level 2 = Year 2 etc

Once the number of levels has been satisfactorily defined this constraint will be removed.

The schools participating in the study receive guidelines for each unit which define the language functions to be learned and present examples of language realising these functions in relation to the topic. Level 1 is mainly concerned with seeking and giving information.

Language which might be considered appropriate is printed in: (a) Possible Reading Texts, which express the information to be sought or given in the form of continuous narratives; (b) Possible Target Sentences which express the information appropriately in interrogative or declarative sentences.

The language printed in the guidelines is intended for exemplification only. The teachers are free to choose their own lexis and structures to express the function, if they so wish. The guidelines also contain notes on assessment procedures for the different modes.

The assessment procedures for Talking take three forms:

(1) Self-Assessment (Pupil) Each pupil has a Progress Card which expresses the language tasks (s)he has to learn to perform in the unit. It contains, for example:

I can talk about	I can ask someone his/her
my name	name
my age etc	age etc

Pupils tick the appropriate box when they think they have mastered the language task set. On completion of the card they can ask the teacher to be tested on the language function involved.

(2) Linguistic Assessment (Class) This comprises a subjective assessment by the teacher that the class has mastered the language forms of the unit.

(3) Functional Assessment (Pairs) This takes the form of an exchange between two pupils monitored by the teacher. The exchange is mediated by means of cue cards. Each pupil of the pair has a card on which the data to be sought or given is expressed in symbolic form. The visual symbols used are those familiar to the pupils from pair and class work done during the unit. For example, the outline of a house together with a question mark might cue: 'Tu habites une maison?' Each pupil gets the information required by asking questions and writes down a record of what (s)he learns. The sequencing of the symbols used in the test would be different from that experienced in class practice.

The cards used for class practice and functional assessment purposes require the pupils to adopt French identities (eg Jean Duval: 16 ans: Dieppe, etc). The seeking of information takes three forms:

(1) Open task: one pupil has a card containing the data of his/her role. The other pupil has to find out what (s)he can;

(2) Closed task: the data expressed on one card corresponds to symbols requesting it on the other;

(3) Mismatch: the two cards contain similar but not identical information. One pupil has to check that his/her information is correct by asking questions of his/her partner and using the responses to modify his/her own information if necessary.

In all three forms each pupil has to assume the role of both seeker and giver of information. The roles are assessed separately. During the exchange the pupils record in writing the information they get. After the exchange each writes it up firstly, as a scenario (ie his/her version of the dialogue) and secondly as a report (ie his/her summary of the information). The scenario handles the 'tu/je', the report the 'il/elle' relationship. The subsequent written forms can be used to confirm that items of information have been appropriately transmitted orally (Talking Mode) or they can show by their degree of well-formedness the level of the pupil's written performance (Reading/Writing Mode).

The information dealt with in Level 1 for assessment purposes amounts to 30 items per unit. Of these thirty items, twenty will be drawn from the current unit and ten will revise previous learning. The unit can be broken down into six Assessment Blocks of five items each, viz:

Seeking information		Giving information	
AB_1	5 current items	AB_4	5 current items
AB_2	5 current items	AB_5	5 current items
AB_3	5 revision items	AB_6	5 revision items

The teacher will be responsible for the composition and sequencing of the Assessment Blocks. He will be able to separate or mix current and revision items as he wishes.

For the purposes of the Feasibility Study it will be assumed that to be successful at Level 1 a pupil will have to meet the following criterion:

Three items correctly transmitted out of five attempted from each of four Assessment Blocks out of six attempted in each of the five Units.

NOTES

1. For definition, see, inter alia: Techniques of evaluation for a notional syllabus, Keith Morrow, Royal Society of Arts, 1977, p 16.

2. Eileen Turner: Criterion-referenced assessment: an annotated bibliography. Stirling: University of Stirling, Department of Education, 1980.

5

Organisation, Administration and Co-ordination

In this chapter we give details of a number of individual groups, to outline differences and similarities, and to give guidance to groups of teachers who may be thinking of forming working parties. The most common experience has been that an outside speaker, invited perhaps to speak at an in-service training session, has stimulated local teachers to form a working party, often with the help of an adviser or a lecturer from a local department of education. One possible source of income is a grant from the LEA's curriculum development fund, but in many groups assistance is minimal and relies heavily on extra (unpaid) work by teachers. Some groups are now considering self-financing on the York pattern (a charge per school or per head, taken from capitation). It is clear that many groups rely on 'hidden' help, ie the services of people who can, but need not, consider this as a legitimate function of their paid employment. There are areas of the country where teachers would like to get together, but are hesitant to take the plunge without encouragement or resources. We hope that teachers in this situation will find the following accounts of practical help.

(1) BIRMINGHAM

In September 1978, after working together for two years on supplementary materials for use with Longman's A1, a small group of Birmingham Consortium Linguists decided to fulfil the need in the City for a structured scheme of language learning. Other schemes were studied before starting work, but it was found that none was appropriate to local requirements.

Meetings took place regularly on Tuesday afternoons, when Consortium Linguists were asked to be free of teaching commitments for the purpose of in-service work. Level 1 in French was produced by July 1979, and distributed to all Birmingham secondary schools in the following September. The material was topic-based, and specimen tests were distributed along with the syllabus. It is hoped to have Level 2 in French in the schools by September 1980, together with Level 1 in Spanish; there is also a prospective Level 1 in German. It is hoped that about 1,000 pupils will take Level 1 in French in 1980. Meetings with interested teachers have taken place, at which some partial doubters have become convinced of the value of the scheme; at the same time, the production team has made some minor alterations to the materials in the light of the teachers' experience and requirements.

The scheme is presently backed by a small grant from the LEA, and a City Certificate has been drafted which is in the hands of the Adviser, who has supported the work.

(2) CUMBRIA AND LANCASHIRE

In June 1978, Heads of Modern Languages Departments in twenty secondary schools in Cumbria and Lancashire were invited by their respective Advisers for Modern Languages to attend a meeting at the Institute of European Education, St Martin's College, Lancaster. The meeting was called by the Director of the Institute and the two Advisers in order to try to ascertain if there would be any support for the setting up of a pilot project in graded proficiency testing in modern languages in a small number of schools in the two countries. At the meeting, the Heads of Department were addressed by Mr Michael Buckby of the University of York and were also given an opportunity of acquainting themselves with work already ongoing in graded testing in other areas of the United Kingdom. At the close of the meeting it was agreed that the teachers should be given time to think about what they had learned and an opportunity to discuss it with their colleagues, and that a further meeting would be called in the Autumn.

At the second meeting, held in October 1978, the teachers and Advisers agreed that during the academic year 1978-79, syllabuses and tests should be drawn up for Levels 1 and 2 in French, with candidates taking the first tests in June 1979. Six local working parties with specific tasks were set up, and the Institute of European Education at St Martin's College undertook to print syllabuses and testing materials, and to provide validation for the tests and certification.

By March 1979, draft syllabuses and tests had been drawn up and approved by the six working parties and, in June 1979, some 2,000 pupils took tests at Level 1 in French and some 500 pupils took tests at Level 2. 86 percent of candidates scored 65 percent or over at Level 1 and 92 percent of candidates scored 65 percent or over at Level 2.

As a result of the enthusiasm engendered in the project schools by the French tests during the academic year 1978-79, the Director of the Institute of European Education and the Advisers for Modern Languages in Cumbria and Lancashire agreed to invite a further twenty secondary schools in the two counties to enter candidates for French 1 and 2; to set up working parties to devise syllabuses for German and Spanish (1 and 2), for piloting in June 1980; to hold a two-day evaluation meeting of the Heads of Department of the original twenty pilot schools in October 1979; to invite a small working party to attend a residential in-service week (Spring 1980) in order to devise syllabuses for French 3; to make contact with the appropriate CSE boards to discuss the implications of graded proficiency testing for public examinations in the North-West.

Following from the above decisions, 8,000 pupils in Cumbria and Lancashire took Level 1 tests in French in June 1980, 2,500 pupils took Level 2 tests in French, 1,300 pupils took Level 1 tests in German and 500 pupils took Level 1 tests in Spanish. In addition, draft syllabuses and tests for Level 3 French were drawn up and useful negotiations have been set in motion with two examining boards.

Moving towards the academic year 1980-81, the following plans have been set out:

(i) Tests at Levels 1 and 2 in French will be made generally available to all secondary schools in Lancashire and Cumbria.

(ii) Tests at Level 1 and 2 in German and Spanish will be given further trial runs in selected schools in Cumbria, Lancashire and also Liverpool.

(iii) Teaching towards the first Level 3 tests in French will commence in about a dozen schools and work will begin on drawing up objectives and devising syllabuses for tests at Level 3 in German and Spanish.

(iv) Negotiations will continue with the examining boards in the hope that tests based on the Level 3 syllabuses will be accepted by the boards as suitable for all-grades CSE examinations in Communicative Language Skills.

(v) Local, in-service meetings will be set up to provide support for teachers using the tests and to encourage teachers to produce and share their own teaching materials.

Finance

To date, funding for the production of syllabuses, testing materials and certificates has come from the Institute of European Education at St Martin's College, Lancaster. The Cumbria and Lancashire LEA's have paid teachers' travelling expenses and willingly released teachers to attend meetings. However, as from the beginning of the academic year 1980-81, funding for the production of all tests generally available to schools will have to come from the two LEA's and ways of achieving this are currently being researched. Despite the bleak financial outlook at present, both Cumbria and Lancashire are favourably disposed towards graded proficiency tests in modern languages and are clearly doing all within their power to ensure their success.

(3) HILLINGDON

Having read a number of Harding/Page articles in various publications and attended a meeting chaired by Mr M V Salter, HMI in Oxfordshire, the Modern Language Adviser called a meeting in May 1977 for all Borough secondary schools where he described the growing interest in graded tests, the early pioneer work in Oxford and York, their value as 'motivators' for all children, especially the less able, and the kind of syllabus one might set up at the very first level.

The meeting was well attended, the Borough generally expressed keen interest and a small working party was set up for French 1 and for German 1. The two working parties met together at the very start to discuss common objectives and possible differences since French is FL1 in all schools whilst German is generally introduced in Years 2 or 3. A syllabus consisting of four topic areas was established for both languages - Personal, Shopping, Café/Restaurant and Directions in Town. A member of each team took on responsibility for each topic area and meetings were held throughout the Autumn term of 1977 and Spring/Summer terms of 1978 to discuss in great detail the appropriateness of each suggested topic syllabus.

The syllabus content was agreed by the Autumn term 1978 and the groups then turned their attention to suitable test items. All, including the Modern Languages Adviser (who was involved throughout as convenor of meetings and working party member), felt their own personal inadequacy at this stage and discussions were long and tiring. However, afterwards, all members agreed that the process, although painful, had been an illuminating one, obliging everyone to think clearly about objectives and the unsuitability of many items which had been proposed and might well have been adopted in an individual school situation without the scrutiny of a critical group.

Nevertheless this is still the area in which the working parties feel the greatest diffidence and remain dissatisfied with their efforts after eighteen months of work.

Pilot scheme Summer term 1979

Test items were finally agreed for the two areas to be assessed - Spoken French/German and Listening/Reading Comprehension of French/German - and papers typed out (by the teams) and duplicated (by the teams) in time for the pilot run during the Summer term 1979. In the event four schools provided about 720 candidates for the French Level B(orough) A(chievement) C(ertificate) and three schools about 220 candidates for the German Level 1 BAC. The pass mark was set at 45/75 for French and 50/75 for German. The results were as follows: French entries 722, Pass 555; German entries 225, Pass 172. The children came from Years 2 (majority) and 3 in their schools.

All schools participating expressed very positive attitudes about the value of the BAC. 'We noticed immediately an improved attitude in class, in general, and that most pupils became very excited in the period leading up to the test. Pupils also took to oral and conversation practice much more sensibly and readily' is a comment from one of the schools and typical of them all.

However, dissatisfaction was expressed by all concerning the breadth of the syllabus (too much included) and this has led to a vigorous pruning, with any items felt to be only marginally relevant in each topic area now excluded and a number of test items modified. The Autumn term (1979) and Spring term 1980 have been spent redrafting the syllabus and suspect test items.

The Modern Languages Adviser then called a further Borough meeting for all schools and the working parties provided every FL teacher and Headteacher in the Borough with a full folder of all papers, syllabuses, etc, describing the revised Level 1. Fourteen schools attended the meeting and a further Level 1 experiment will be conducted this Summer term 1980. The children who are successful will, of course, receive their BA certificates which are endorsed by the Borough and signed by the Director of Education. Suitable prize-giving ceremonies are conducted in each school either at the end of the Summer term or at the beginning of the new school year in September. The number of candidates for this second phase is not yet clear but will probably be about 1,000 French and 400 German.

Organisation

The work has fallen upon a small number of people who have given up countless hours in the evening to achieve the modest progress to date. German numbers have dropped disastrously and the impetus has been maintained largely through the efforts of two or three devoted members but new offers of help have been received following the second

Borough meeting recently held. Only on one occasion has the Modern Languages Adviser requested Headteachers to release (French) working party members during the day but it is recognised that progress would be considerably accelerated if meetings could be held regularly in school time.

The two working parties have now begun the arduous task of devising suitable Level 2 tests for German and French but, inevitably, this challenge has led to a great deal of debate about the nature and purpose of Level 2. We know that groups all over the country have encountered the same problem and the Modern Languages Adviser has been trying to locate and photocopy all relevant articles on the subject to be found in TES, BALT, MLA Journal, etc. All this has made thought-provoking reading but puts the two parties further and further behind the clock as Level 2 must be out in schools by the Spring term 1981. To complete the Borough programme at this stage, a small group of Hispanists is now embarking on a Level 1 Spanish test under the guidance and presence of the Modern Language Adviser. We all hope Joan Clarke is right when she says 'It is inconceivable that a group of teachers would have devoted so much time and energy to regular, protracted meetings and to the writing of tests, had not the rewards been immense'.

(4) ILEA

Since the inception of Eclair in 1975, teachers in London had become increasingly interested in exploring ways of assessing pupils who were using this material. In September 1977, Margaret Wilson, Warden of the Modern Language Centre, invited a group of teachers to join a working party under the chairmanship of Dennis Johnson. The first meeting at the Modern Language Centre in October 1977 was attended by seven teachers and supported by members of the Inspectorate and the Warden. After a lengthy discussion, it was decided that tests should be based on Eclair and should test the four skills separately. Eclair is a three-year course and it was felt that assessment should logically come at the end of the course. However, in October 1977, Year 3 of the course was still incomplete, so Dennis Johnson suggested that a 'stepping stone' set of tests should be devised on the material of the first two years.

The group (increased to ten teachers) met regularly once a fortnight after school at the Modern Language Centre, generally from 5.00 pm till 8.00 pm. One of the group acted as secretary and all meetings were minuted. A great deal of time in the first term was devoted to devising the methods and aims of assessment, ways of isolating the skills and standards to be achieved. It was finally decided to produce four tests: Listening, Reading, Speaking and France-scope (Background studies). No writing test was to be devised at this stage. After Christmas the group divided into four small sub-groups to produce draft tests, thus meeting alternate weeks in the sub-groups as well as the fortnightly meetings. Just before Easter the group devoted a residential weekend to the final revision of the tests. It was decided to pre-test in 18 schools in June/July 1978, involving some 500 pupils. The results and teachers' comments would be processed and analysed by the ILEA Research and Statistics Department.

At the first meeting in September 1978 the group learned that there was great support and enthusiasm from teachers using the tests and an increasing demand for tests for Year 1 pupils to be devised. After some discussion it was decided to go ahead and produce Level 1 tests based on Eclair Units 1 to 6 and Extra A and B. The 'stepping stone' tests were now discarded.

The Level 1 tests were pre-tested in June/July 1979 in 30 schools with 900 pupils and the results again statistically analysed. These tests, after revision in the light of the analysis will be available to schools for the Summer of 1980.

Owing to other commitments, Dennis Johnson resigned from the group and in September 1979 June Farrel took over. During 1979-80 the group has been working on Level 1 tests (Eclair 7 to 12 and Extra C and D) for pre-testing in June/July 1980. After the statistical analysis and revision, these will be available for schools in 1981. It is hoped to produce Level 3 tests during 1980-81.

The Learning Materials Service of the ILEA has produced all the tests and designed the layout. They will also be producing certificates. The cost of the tests and the statistical analysis has been met by the ILEA. When the tests become available, the schools will be able to purchase them in the same way as they now purchase Eclair materials.

Teachers' travelling expenses to the Modern Language Centre where the regular meetings are held and the cost of the residential weekends have also been paid by the ILEA. The typing and duplicating of the minutes and the draft papers was generally carried out by members of the group, though the Modern Language Centre was frequently able to assist.

Though the membership of the group has changed, some members have been involved since the beginning and there is a nucleus of teachers who carry on from one year to the next. There has been constant support from the Inspectorate, the Modern Language Centre and the Learning

Materials Service. The group has set itself very high standards and every point is thoroughly discussed and revised until agreement is reached. This has involved the teachers concerned in an enormous amount of work and it is hoped that the final tests reflect their enthusiams, dedication and professionalism. It is likely that the tests will be used in nearly all the ILEA's 185 secondary schools as well as in many other non-ILEA schools who teach with Eclair.

(5) HERTFORDSHIRE

In 1975, as part of the Burgundy, Hertfordshire, Rheinland-Pfalz tripartite activities, experimental work was undertaken with classes of 'slow learners' in French and German. The success of these classes and the interest of other Hertfordshire teachers in the aims, objectives and methodology led to the setting up of a working party by the Hertfordshire Modern Languages Teachers' Association (HMLTA) to look into the possibility of establishing a system of graded tests of achievement within the county. It was felt that the experience gained with the 'slow learner' classes would be of direct value to the working party and many of the objectives could be incorporated in a syllabus intended for this wider ability range.

French

A small working party of six members prepared a document for discussion at a residential county conference held in November 1977. The conference gave a mandate to an enlarged working party to prepare firm proposals which should be ready to be implemented from the beginning of the 1978/79 academic year with pupils entering for Level 1 French tests in the Summer of 1979, Level 2 French tests in the Summer of 1980.

The following statements summarise the Hertfordshire Foundation Course in French:

(1) There are two levels for French, the first is within the competence of most pupils by the end of the second year and the second by the end of the third year.

(2) As the progress which pupils make in the different skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) is not uniform they are able to take the skills separately at the different levels. Thus, at the end of the third year, a pupil might have acquired Level 1 in speaking, listening, and reading, with Level 2 in listening only. Writing does not figure as a test in Level 1.

(3) It is important to emphasise that the syllabus which is topic-based is in no way intended to be prescriptive or restrictive, and able pupils need not be aware that the syllabus is included in the much wider one they are following. It is hoped that all pupils, not merely the less able, will take these tests. Able pupils would take the tests earlier than indicated, less able pupils would need greater preparation.

(4) The tests are short, calculated to fit within a normal school period and in many schools replace the usual school yearly examination. The orals are arranged by the teacher any time from Easter to Whitsun. The written tests are administered from Whitsun to 1 July at a time convenient for the school.

(5) The certificate is signed by the County Education Officer. Only one certificate is issued to each pupil who is successful in one or more of the skills at either level. This must be retained by the pupil after Level 1 and handed in for the appropriate endorsement for Level 2. Only a pass is recorded. The back of the certificate gives details of the work covered in each skill at each level.

(6) It is not intended by the Hertfordshire working party to go beyond Level 2 as it is felt that there is already a variety of valid objectives for pupils in fourth and fifth years.

A Level 1 syllabus was sent to each secondary school in Hertfordshire in the Autumn of 1978. Almost 4,000 pupils were entered for some or all the tests for Level 1 in 1979. A Level 2 French syllabus was sent to each secondary school in Hertfordshire in the Autumn of 1979. 11,000 pupils from 52 schools are currently taking tests in Level 1 and 2 during this Summer term 1980.

The same eight members of the Hertfordshire Foundation Course working party have been meeting regularly since Spring 1978. These include three serving teachers, two headmasters, a lecturer for the Hertfordshire College of Higher Education, the advisory teacher for Modern Languages and the County Adviser. Their work involves the preparation of the test items, making decisions concerning the administration of the tests within the schools, arranging information and discussion meetings for teachers wishing to enter pupils for these tests.

German

In January 1980 a working party of seven serving teachers and the assistant adviser for modern languages was set up to look at the possibility of introducing graded tests for German. It has been decided to introduce two levels.

Level 2 is being developed first as it is felt that this will meet the most urgent need. It is intended for pupils at the end of their third year in the secondary school so that they may be encouraged to continue with their German by achieving success in the tests or alternatively as an indication of the standard reached by pupils obliged to drop German because of the system of options. The German syllabus like the French syllabus is topic-based. The skills are divided into speaking, listening and reading, with writing for Level 2 only. The German syllabus will be sent to all Hertfordshire schools in the Autumn of 1980 and tests will be available to pupils in the Summer of 1981. As there is a demand for a syllabus and tests for less academic pupils who have begun the study of German, the Level 1 syllabus will be available in 1981 and tests in the Summer of 1982.

Organisation and finance

(1) All meetings for working parties and teachers entering pupils for the tests are held at teachers' centres.

(2) Members of working parties give freely of their own time to attend meetings and prepare items for the syllabus or test papers. They may reclaim their travelling expenses to the meeting as for any meeting held at a teachers' centre in connection with their professional duties. Meetings take place after school except for the moderation of test papers as this is a lengthy business. When test papers are being prepared meetings occur every two weeks but according to need at other times of the year.

(3) No cost to the individual school or pupils taking tests has been envisaged except in the case of a lost certificate when a replacement is required. The typing has been handled by the secretary of the County Adviser for Modern Languages. The payment for duplication of test papers and printing of the certificates has been covered by funds for Modern Languages administered by the County Adviser. The distribution and collection of test papers to schools is handled by the Teachers' Centre.

(4) The administration of the Hertfordshire Foundation Course in French has been undertaken by the Advisory team for Modern Languages. Owing to the high numbers involved it is an immense task and very time-consuming. With the present financial situation, it is most unlikely that any additional help will be made available even if as anticipated the numbers increase from year to year. Help is now urgently needed for the future.

(6) KENT

One of the features of the Kent 'scene', unlike the majority of LEAs in England and Wales, is that secondary reorganisation, dependent on the availability of adequate funds and buildings, was slow in the early 1970's. Most of the schemes were in fact at that time interim reorganisation schemes which have since remained fixed in this stage. Although there are some comprehensive schools, some of which are very large schools, the majority of Modern Language teachers in the county do not teach across the ability range. For Kent, the graded objectives movement was seen as a means of giving purpose and status to work with pupils of below average ability whilst providing them with realistic short term objectives. It was also seen as a support system for staff who teach in very small secondary modern schools, sometimes in a department of one. It also gives purpose to developmental work in in-service training with teachers. The idea of certification has been a successful, indeed essential part of the scheme even though the whole process (because of lack of suitable staff) cannot at the moment be monitored by statistical means.

The Kent scheme initially took its inspiration from the pragmatic work developed in Oxfordshire. It was organised but not controlled centrally and teachers were drawn into the work by developing the ideas, the syllabuses and the tests through the normal county pattern on in-service work, which is mainly residential. As long ago as 1974, Brian Page was invited to speak about graded objectives work to a county in-service course to prepare the ground. It is hoped that as the scheme develops and when more teachers are involved, the work can revert to being locally based and developed, even though an element of central monitoring would be retained and possibly even developed. All divisions except one have teachers' centres and these teachers' centres, although not specialist centres, would provide a common meeting ground.

Development and methods of working

After the initial central impulse, the greater part of the work has been teacher inspired and controlled. It is the testing of productive oral work that has given the greatest heartsearching although it is interesting that the schools most willing to undertake this have been the largest and most demanding schools. It is agreed by all teachers that some productive oral work on the part of the pupils is essential. Teachers are free to handle and develop syllabuses in their own way. It is hoped to gather together some of the ways in which this has been done. The tests follow a story line which is linked to a visit to the foreign country. In the first year (1978) about ten schools prepared pupils for Level 1 and 2 in French and Level 1 in German on an experimental basis. In 1979, about 30 schools took part on a similar basis. Tests are a moveable feast in the Summer term although some schools would appreciate an even more flexible arrangement. The schools invited to take part in both 1979 and 1980 were those involved in the in-service work. There is a follow-up meeting for all schools at the beginning of the Autumn term. In 1980 about 35 schools will present a larger number of pupils for Levels 1, 2 and 3 in French and Levels 1 and 2 in German.

Financing

This has been modest and much depends on the goodwill of the teachers and the schools. The finance available has been from two main sources: (i) the County In-service Training budget from which all teacher's courses are supported and (ii) the County Curriculum Development Fund which supports individual projects for a limited length of time.

Future developments

The certificate is now going to be produced by the graphic design department of the Maidstone College of Art as a student project. A Level 1 and/or 2 in Spanish would seem another reasonable forward step although the number of pupils involved would be small. At the moment there are no further plans for development in German because normal examination objectives seem to suit most pupils who are at present following such courses. A Mode 3 CSE submission in French would seem to be another avenue of development as would a strengthening of the content of the syllabuses.

(7) LEEDS

A meeting was called by the local adviser at the instigation of Brian Page to see what support there was for a graded examinations scheme in Leeds. It was held in June 1977. A group of volunteers from that meeting formed a working party which met for the first time in July 1977. This group gradually reduced itself to ten members of whom about six were regular attenders and did most of the work.

There was a long period of preliminary discussion. The Oxford syllabus and the York test papers were examined and the group decided to construct a Leeds syllabus based on the topics of the Council of Europe Threshold Level. A syllabus was drawn up for each topic based mainly on performance objectives but with occasional language extracts. This process occupied the six meetings of the Autumn and Spring terms 1977/8. The Summer term was occupied in devising test types. Many were produced by individuals or groups of two or three. These were then subjected to close scrutiny by the group. By the end of the Summer the group had a fairly clear idea of what was wanted, but no fixed test items. There were no meetings in the Autumn. The whole group felt the need to digest the experience of spending a year questioning what they were teaching and arriving at positive conclusions. They wished to put their ideas into practice.

In the Spring term 1979, five meetings were held in which the tests for Levels 2 and 3 in French were devised and examination procedures decided upon. A final meeting in June reviewed the examination that had been taken, decided a pass mark, and looked at borderline cases. In Autumn 1979 meetings began again and it was decided to work out a Level 1 in French, German and Spanish.

Method of working

Meetings can only take place outside school time. Requests to hold meetings in school hours have been turned down. This means, in effect, meetings limited to about 1½ hours immediately after a full school day about once a month.

Attempts to set up a committee structure of chairman, secretary, etc have failed and the group works as a collective. An agenda is worked out, based on the feeling of the previous meeting and on what needs to be done to keep up to schedule for the next examinations. Items from papers are scrutinised and commented on. Members volunteer to produce new questions and recast sections of papers according to the comments made. These are dealt with quite ruthlessly at the next meeting until a satisfactory test is arrived at. This can take quite a long time but has the advantage that all the teachers in the working party have now had considerable experience in working out tests which are in the spirit of the scheme.

Finance

Meetings are held at the Language Teaching Information Centre maintained by the LEA. The costs of typing and duplicating the papers are included in the Centre's budget. A special grant was obtained from the LEA to print proficiency certificates. The teachers receive no expenses for travel to meetings. The authority has promised to continue this arrangement for the current year but it is expected that as the scheme expands some form of fee from participating schools will have to be envisaged.

Numbers involved

In the first experimental year (1979), ten schools entered about 350 children. In the second year (1980) 50 schools have stated a wish to take part; the number of candidates is not yet known.

(8) LOTHIAN REGION GLAFLL (GRADED LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING)

Setting up

There was a consensus of opinion among teachers that something should be done to make foreign language learning relevant, educationally valuable, and enjoyable to the entire ability range, permitting all pupils to attain the highest level of achievement that they could in the time available to them.

The work was set in motion by the Assistant Adviser in Modern Languages through the Regional Study Group in Modern Languages (RSGML), a representative body of teachers from all sectors of language teaching in the Region.

Method of working

The starter papers for discussion of particular aspects of GLAFLL are usually produced by the Assistant Adviser and then discussed at length by the RSGML. Decisions are taken, and the various sub-groups of the RSGML implement those decisions in syllabus documents, tests, materials, etc, in the various languages and at the various Stages and Levels concerned. There are some 35 members of the RSGML involved in GLAFLL. RSGML Sub Groups have co-opted further teachers as members, and membership is currently as follows:

RSGML French Sub-Group	20 members
RSGML German Sub-Group	18 members
RSGML Spanish Sub-Group	7 members
RSGML Russian Sub-Group	7 members
RSGML Italian Sub-Group	7 members
RSGML FE/Community Education Sub-Group	5 members

The work of each sub-group is co-ordinated by a Chairman.

A teacher has been employed on a year's secondment as Research Officer GLAFLL. Whether this arrangement will be continued in 1980/81 is as yet uncertain. This teacher is able to devote her entire time to the development and evaluation of GLAFLL. All GLAFLL work is processed by the RSGML which in turn reports to the Regional Consultative Committee on the Curriculum. This committee sets the ultimate seal of approval on any proposals put forward. The project looked to Oxfordshire, York and ILEA for guidance in the initial stages, and the help received was enormous.

The philosophy of GLAFLL is in line with current work being done by the Council of Europe. The Lothian GLAFLL project is part of the interaction network of projects set up by the Council of Europe. This has allowed a great deal of cross-fertilisation to take place between ourselves and projects in for example Austria, Ireland, Germany and Portugal. The project is in close contact with the National

Materials Project in Scotland producing the Tour de France course, and is also part of the GOML network, whilst other sources of inspiration and influence are Corder, Widdowson, Wilkins and Halliday, among others.

Ultimately GLAFLL is an attempt to put together a more communicative and more learner-orientated approach to foreign language learning adapted to local circumstances.

Provision of information to teachers and schools

Teachers are informed of GLAFLL progress through Information Days and Seminars during school time, and through courses, workshops and meetings out of school time. The Advisory Service Staff also organise GLAFLL in-school information/ discussion sessions for the staff of a particular school, as and when required, as part of their normal work. A GLAFLL file is kept in every school with numbered documents which teachers can consult at any time. This file is added to as further documents are produced. A copy of the file is held by CILT, and by the SCDS (Aberdeen).

GLAFLL progress

This has been documented in files and papers held by CILT. By the end of 1980 Lothian will have produced Syllabus documents and Stage Tests for Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 in French, German, Spanish, Russian and Italian. A system of progress and assessment involving school-based Pupil Progress Cards in terms of communicative activities, Diagnostic Checks, Achievement Tests at Waystages leading to Regional Stages, Pupil Profiles recording Pupil Progress, and Regional Surrender-Value Stage Tests has been elaborated and is being put into effect in GLAFLL schools. Materials in current use have been related to GLAFLL objectives and gaps noted. Work has started on producing supplementary materials in different schools in different languages. It is unlikely that courses will be produced. Methodological techniques related to communicative language learning and to individual work are being tried out in schools, and an evaluation of these will be done in 1980/81.

Numbers involved

29 schools (out of 50) are currently involved actively in GLAFLL work. A number of others are interested. Requests have been received for Stage Tests in the various languages in 1980 for some 6,000 pupils. This number will certainly increase as the year goes on, since pupils may take Stage Tests when they are ready for them. Successful candidates will be awarded a Pass or Credit on their Regional Record of Achievement in Modern Languages.

Finance

The project has been financed entirely by Lothian Region Advisory Service funds.

(9) NORTHAMPTONSHIRE GRADED EXAMINATIONS

Prior to his appointment to a post in the county, the Chairman of the Northamptonshire group had been involved in the York group's first year of setting limited targets in modern languages for less able pupils. A chance conversation with the County Languages Adviser led to a meeting in December 1977, at which over 40 modern linguists were present. The Chairman spoke at this meeting and distributed copies of the sort of material that had been developed in York. About fifteen people expressed an interest in setting up a working party for Level 1 and the group met for the first time at the end of January 1978.

The group began by looking at materials with which they were already acquainted: the Oxfordshire scheme and the York test papers. It was rapidly decided that the group should look at their own situation rather than base their work on that done by others. Northamptonshire has a broad scheme of international visits and the first, a one-day trip, takes place in the first year. Hence it was decided to base Level 1 on the day trip, Level 2 on the five-day holiday in France and Level 3 on the exchange visit. As these visits take place in Years 1 to 3, a pattern of holding the examinations in terms 4, 6 and 8 was agreed, given that the majority would begin French at the age of eleven in an eleven to eighteen school.

For Level 1, it was agreed that the test should comprise an oral test, a listening comprehension test and a reading comprehension test, each section worth 40 marks. Level 2, which was developed later, was similarly made up of three sections. Level 3, at present in preparation, has included a small section of writing. Level 1 was pre-tested in a variety of schools, including two control schools not involved in the working party, towards the end of 1978. A number of anomalies had arisen and the problems were resolved following the trials, and the first Level 1 certificate examination was held in March 1979. A pass mark of 65 out of 120 was set, not without discussion, and 85.2 percent of 1915 candidates were then awarded a certificate.

Method of working

Meetings take place outside school time, with the exception of those group members who have represented their groups at the CSE board regional working party meetings in Nottingham. Meetings have averaged out at about a meeting a month since January 1978, but there have sometimes been longer gaps, as the preparation, duplication and circulation of materials takes time.

The group has not set up a committee structure but each working party does have a chairman. After the first pre-test trials, a 'publicity' meeting was called in November 1978 at which 27 schools were represented. After that meeting, a Level 2 French group and groups for Level 1 in German and Spanish were set up. An overall 'validating' committee was also set up to oversee the work of the various groups, with each group represented on the committee. There is now a Level 3 working party.

There is no formal agenda, but the tasks for the next meeting are distributed and gradually the questions evolve from the material contributed by all. As the section nears completion, one person takes responsibility for writing up, with any necessary instructions, the section of the examination. At the same time, a defined content syllabus is drawn up.

Finance

Meetings are held at the Teachers' Centre in Northampton. The working parties have been fortunate in that the adviser, Mr A Broadbent, has supported the work by treating the graded examinations working parties as part of the in-service training scheme, thereby providing us with the logistical support for duplication and circulation which is needed. As a result, it has not so far been necessary to levy a charge.

Numbers involved

About 3,000 pupils have taken the Level 1 examination to date and possibly 1,000 pupils will take Level 2. It is hoped that the numbers taking the examinations will increase as the participating schools not actively involved in the schemes begin to use the material produced by the group.

Development

It is planned to hold two 'publicity' meetings in May with the dual purpose of broadening the base of the working parties and informing modern linguists of the work produced. The flaw in that is that the group relies upon the willingness of teachers to attend meetings. However, it is probably not possible to do more, while remaining non-prescriptive. There are definite indications that, as more pupils are finding French to be an enjoyable subject and also are being succesful, more pupils are opting to take French to public examination level. The group also plans to revise Levels 1, 2 and 3 before taking any further steps.

10. OLDHAM

The idea of a graded objectives scheme was first mentioned in the course of a joint meeting between Oldham and Rochdale language teachers, and HMIs in Spring 1978. The first meeting to discuss moves in Oldham was held in September 1978.

It was decided that writing a completely new syllabus and test would mean that the scheme would take a long time to get off the ground, so the York reading test was adopted, together with an existing listening test already in use in one school. This eased the problem of creating a tape with limited resources. A simplified oral test was adopted to solve the problem of time needed for conducting them. The proposals were adopted as a trial run to test the benefits of graded testing. By December 1978 the ten schools interested had received all necessary papers.

Operation

Schools are free to conduct the tests at any time from January to May. A sample of the orals are recorded and moderated at a meeting of all participating schools in June. Some modifications to the tests were made after the first results in June 1979, and the same procedure is in operation for 1980. Meetings are held after school, at the Teachers' Centre.

Finance

The scheme was initiated by one of the Heads of Department with the official status of co-ordinator of Heads of Department. Since his departure there is no-one to supervise the scheme, although moves are afoot to keep the meetings going. The LEA provided duplicating facilities to provide each school with one copy of all relevant papers, and a tape copying service for the listening test. Certificates were also printed centrally for 1979 and 1980. There are no expenses available for teachers.

Numbers

In 1979: 9 schools, 800 pupils. In 1980: 8 schools.

11. OXFORDSHIRE (OMLAC)

As a response to a lecture on 'Defined Objectives in language teaching' given in the Summer of 1975 at the conference for modern language teachers in Oxfordshire, the Modern Languages Advisory Committee moved to set up working groups of teachers whose aim would be to produce syllabuses for a graded approach to modern language learning. Interested teachers attended a meeting in the Autumn of that year and working parties were formed to produce Levels 1 and 2 in French, and Level 1 in German. These levels were viewed as existing within a framework of which Level 5 would represent an achievement comparable to the GCE 'O' level.

Composition of working parties

The teachers who had volunteered for the working parties were joined at an early stage by a member of a university department of education, and one from a college of education. Their experience was an important influence on the form in which these first syllabus documents and the tests appeared. Co-ordination, and promotion both within the county and nationally was undertaken by the curriculum development leader who provided a close link with the local authority administration. He has remained the Chairman of the Level 3 working party, set up, upon completion of the first levels, to extend the programme of work to further and other languages. The involvement of the advisory service, of teachers from both higher and secondary education and, more recently, through membership or associate membership, of native speakers in French and German working in the field of modern language teaching, has provided the breadth of experience considered necessary for the success of the working party's efforts.

Method of working

The early working parties decided collectively on a scheme for the formulation of syllabuses at Levels 1 and 2 - the contexts, the topics and the range of situations. The topics were divided among individual members who undertook to write lists of exponents for speaking, listening and reading. This work was then considered at the working party meetings, and decisions made as to inclusion, exclusion, amendment and organisation. The tests at these levels were produced by the specialists on the working parties. The Level 3 working party was set up in 1978, and drew from the groups who had worked at Levels 1 and 2. Its first task was to evaluate the completed syllabuses and establish a sounder theoretical base for the continuation of its work. The principle of dividing work according to the strengths of its members was already well established. As interest grew within the county, additional groups of teachers were formed to produce syllabuses, on the model of the French, in other languages, and also to write test items. Since its formation the Level 3 working party has met three or four times a term to plan its work, to discuss individual contributions, and to organise the production and administration of tests. A full working week was also arranged in November 1979 to finalise the form and content of the Level 3 syllabus document.

Finance

Meetings have taken place in the Teachers' Centres. The LEA allocated funds to cover administrative costs and the travelling expenses of working party members. In addition, the authority has allowed supply teachers to replace members attending meetings in school time, and backed the project with the resources of the County Curriculum Development and Printing Services. It has also released teachers on secondment to the project, one half-time in 1978-79, and one full-time in 1979-80 and 1980-81.

Numbers involved

Participation in the OMLAC tests rose, between 1977 and 1979, from 1,600 candidates (17 schools) to 6,500 (42 schools). A small number of these candidates were from schools outside the county and the College of Further Education. In 1979, the introduction of tests in Italian, Spanish and Russian accounted for some of the increase in numbers. In 1980, 5,835 candidates are entered from 42 schools.

(12) SHEFFIELD

In November 1978 a meeting was called by a number of teachers who had been on a Graded Tests course at York and who were interested in setting up a scheme in Sheffield. It was decided that there should not, in the first instance, be any formal committee structure and that any decisions should be made on the basis of a simple majority vote. Richard Brook volunteered to prepare agendas and minutes, and thus became our informal chairman and spokesman. Approximately twenty schools were represented at this first meeting and at subsequent meetings there have usually been between twelve and twenty participants.

The preliminary meeting decided in principle to try to establish a structure of tests at different levels along the lines of (but not identical to) the York and Oxfordshire schemes. It was further decided that the priority lay in catering for the needs of average and below average Lower School pupils. Two tests should be established in French, German and possibly Spanish. Level 1 would be of the standard expected of lower ability pupils after two years of study, Level 2 after three years of study.

A testing syllabus for Level 1 in each language was drawn up at subsequent meetings. It was based on five topic areas and included vocabulary and basic structures which a pupil might reasonably be expected to need and use on exchange visits, trips abroad, when writing letters, etc. A distinction was made between active and passive vocabulary.

In January 1979, the Level 1 testing syllabus in French and German was finalised after everyone had had an opportunity to argue for the omission or inclusion of specific items.

At the next meeting, in February 1979, it was decided that a Listening, Reading and Speaking test should be produced in both French and German for use at the end of the Summer term. It was also decided to ask the LEA for help in certificating the scheme and in providing modest financial support.

At subsequent meetings individual testing items were discussed, criticised and rewritten. This process resulted in a Level 1 test for both French and German which satisfied the vast majority of participants. A short agreement trial was held for the purpose of establishing a marking scheme for the Speaking test (the Listening and Reading tests being largely composed of multiple-choice items and thus presenting no problems), and in June/July 1979 the tests were administered to pupils in eight schools, the LEA having agreed to finance the printing and certification of the tests.

Since then, interest in the city has grown and some 30 schools and adult centres were represented at the 1979-81 agreement trial for Level 1 tests. Work on a Level 2 syllabus and tests, revision of Level 1 tests and writing of alternative Level 1 tests (for re-testing) have proceeded apace and Level 2 tests will be administered in the Summer of 1980. The next major decision, to be taken in September 1980, is whether or not we wish to proceed to Levels 3 and 4.

Method of working

Meetings usually take place at the Teachers' Centre and last for about 1½ to 2 hours. When possible the meetings begin at 3.00 pm.

The informal committee structure adopted has worked well and there have been no major disagreements about policy decisions. It soon became apparent, however, that the scheme involved far too much work for just one person and so an ad hoc committee was formed, comprising Richard Brook, Chairman in charge of Development, the LEA adviser Peter Eustace, in charge of printing of papers and certificates, and D Staniforth, Secretary, in charge of distribution of papers and certificates, and keeping of records. This has worked well so far, but it is clear that with the increasing administrational burden of further levels and options it may be necessary to further divide the administration of the tests, possibly between languages.

Progress

It is generally believed that the scheme has been successful. Some 2,000 candidates will be taking Graded Tests this Summer and there have been encouraging reports of increased motivation and interest among pupils.

(13) WALTHAM FOREST

(This scheme is not in line with the mainstream of GOML, but is included as an example of local initiative in testing below CSE level)

Background

Two major developments took place as a result of the two-day conference with HMI following publication of Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools. One was the acceptance by the Education Committee of a modern languages policy for the Authority; the other was the setting up of Borough examinations in French at the end of Years 1 and 3. Underlying both moves was a will to overcome the disadvantages besetting foreign languages as a result of the two tier (11-14, 14-18) comprehensive system.

Development

Teachers from High and Senior High Schools were invited to meetings to discuss the form and content of the proposed examinations. The majority wish was for a Year 1 examination based on the Core Content French Syllabus produced the previous year. The examination comprises an oral test of a simple, general nature and a written paper of one hour's duration. There are nine sections to this: the first five testing specific grammar points, two testing time and number, two requiring a degree of written productive skill. Each section is based on pictures and the first few questions in sections 1 to 7 require only the matching of given phrases or sentences to pictures. The purpose of this is to enable slow-learning pupils to demonstrate skills of comprehension and copying, and it is possible to reach the pass level by these alone (plus a reasonable performance in the oral test, of course). To attain credit and distinction levels pupils must show ability in productive language.

The Year 3 examination was designed in 1979 only for those pupils proceeding to 'O' level and CSE courses in Year 4. This was requested to try to establish standards that would assist High Schools to prepare top set pupils more satisfactorily and would permit Senior High Schools to set with greater confidence. It is a conventional examination, very much in the style of our local CSE Board.

In 1980 two further Year 3 (termed Intermediate) examinations were added. One caters for middle sets and the other for lower sets. The latter is modular and comprises: role-playing and general conversation, a listening comprehension (Autumn term); a reading comprehension and accounts of a number of readers (Spring term); a project and a paper to test basic knowledge of France and French life (Summer term).

All the examinations are certificated.

Entries 1979 Year 1 : 1,150 (9 schools)
Year 3 : 400 (10 schools)

1980 Year 1 : 1,320 (9 schools)
Year 3 : 460 (7 schools) top sets
200 (5 schools) middle sets
150 (2 schools) low sets

Two meetings are held each year and teachers are invited to comment on and contribute to the papers.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest local French examinations are not in line with either the Yorkshire or the Oxfordshire schemes. This is not because the teachers do not recognise the importance of developing oral/aural skills, but because they wish to continue teaching and testing a wider range of skills from the start.

(14) WEST SUSSEX (GOALS)

Origins

At the instigation of the Director of Education, a County Working Party was convened in July 1977, to assess the provision made for modern languages in West Sussex secondary schools and colleges of further education, to agree broad guidelines for future policy in the light of the recently issued HMI document Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools and the ensuing national discussions, and to make detailed recommendations. The working party, chaired by the Senior Advisory Officer for In-service Training and Curriculum Development, with the Modern Languages Adviser as secretary/convenor, met on ten occasions between July 1977 and July 1978, and produced a comprehensive report 'Modern Languages 11-18' in September, 1978.*

At an early stage in the discussions, the working party, consisting largely of modern linguist Heads and Heads of Department, discussed the nature of much modern language work in lower secondary classes, the lack of clearly defined objectives and the consequent loss of motivation in pupils. There was interest in graded test developments which had begun elsewhere, and Jean-Ann Naylor was invited to one of the meetings to tell teachers at first hand about the Oxfordshire scheme. As a result of this session, and study of the York papers, the following recommendation was agreed. 'The working party recommends that we adopt in principle the development and implementation within West Sussex of a system of graded achievement tests in modern languages. Resources should be made available as appropriate to prepare and carry through this scheme .

Planning and initial development

Even before the working party had produced its report, a sub-group consisting of those Heads of Department with a particular interest in the scheme, chaired by the Modern Languages Adviser, had begun to meet separately to consider possible approaches and decide on a programme of work. When the working party had completed its task this group, augmented by Middle School representatives, etc but never containing more than ten people, became the Steering Committee for the county scheme of graded level syllabuses and tests, to be known as GOALS (Graded Objectives for Achievement in Language Skills).

The group was helped considerably in early discussions by its knowledge of developments elsewhere (CILT Seminar, 'T' papers, etc) and particularly by the thinking of John Clark's Lothian group, whose draft papers were generously made available to the group. The research of Wilkins and others on notional/functional syllabus design and the Council of Europe 'Threshold level' investigations were especially germane and it was decided at an early stage that the West Sussex scheme should use this system as a basic framework. It was hoped ultimately to devise syllabuses and tests at five levels in French, German and Spanish, with corresponding County certificates and with Levels 4 and 5 linked to the external examination system. The group decided to concentrate initially on the development of a syllabus and tests for French Level 1 as a kind of template for subsequent work.

Establishment and operation of working groups

The discussions outlined above were made known to teachers through the Modern Languages Newsletter, circulated termly to all modern language teachers in the county. As soon as the Steering Committee had agreed on the principles of the scheme, 'open meetings' were called in Chichester and Crawley during Autumn 1978 to explain the intentions and enlist support. The outcome of these well-attended meetings was the formation of working groups of teachers in Chichester and Crawley, chaired by the Modern Languages Adviser and a senior HOD member of the Steering Committee respectively, with syllabus and test development at Level 1 divided between the groups and co-ordinated by the Committee, which met once or twice per term. The groups (involving some 30 teachers in all) met regularly after school, often on a fortnightly basis, until a draft syllabus and tests were completed during the Summer term 1979, and the latter 'pre-piloted' in one or two schools.

The revised Level 1 French syllabus was made available to all secondary schools in September, 1979, and at meetings to 'launch' this, further working groups were set up to develop German Level 1 (two groups - Burgess Hill and Worthing, again co-ordinated by the Steering Committee) and French Level 1 (one group, based on a centrally sited school in Billingshurst). The response for Spanish was too fragmented to allow the setting up of a separate group, so plans for this have been shelved for the moment. At the time of writing (March 1980), draft syllabuses for French Level 2 and German Level 1 have been completed, and tests will be produced during next term. Developmental work on Level 3 French (and on Level 2 German) will begin this Autumn and take up much of 1980/81 but in the meantime contact has been made with the local CSE board and preliminary discussions should begin soon on the group's request for Level 4 French to be accepted as a Mode 3 CSE from 1982 or 1983. The Steering Committee (fully 'minuted') will continue to meet termly to monitor progress and take policy decisions.

Funding

The work to date has been funded from the general budget for curriculum development in West Sussex, with printing done at County Hall and special provision made for items such as pupil achievement cards, proficiency certificates etc. Meetings are normally held in schools after 4.00 pm and teachers participating in the working groups may claim reimbursement of travel costs. At present, no fee is required of schools participating in the scheme. A limited stock of materials related to GOALS has been purchased from modern language in-service funds and placed in teacher centre/resource centres in Crawley and Chichester. As secondments are much reduced at present, it is very unlikely that any LEA financed secondment to promote developmental work will be forthcoming in the near future, so most of the impetus for research and forward planning naturally comes from the Adviser and members of the Steering Committee. However, the group recently applied for and was successful in obtaining a modest grant from EEC funds, which will free one of the teacher members for six to eight weeks next term and allow the 'background' element to Levels 1 and 2 (French) to be more fully developed.

Involvement of schools

The current year (1979/80) is the first pilot year for Level 1 French and the tests are being offered for the first time next term (and will be available again, unchanged, during the Autumn term, 1980) to secondary schools whose pupils have followed the GOALS syllabus since last September. To date, 3,750 pupils have indicated their intention to participate. It is expected that this number will increase dramatically next year when many Middle Schools will enter pupils for French Level 1 and some 50 schools could be involved in all. (In all Middle School areas, GOALS correspondents have been nominated and area consultative machinery has been set up with termly meetings to co-ordinate teaching and testing procedures.)

*Available from WSCC Education Department, County Hall, Chichester. £2.25

(15) YORK

French

In November 1979 Michael Buckby invited a number of teachers known to be concerned about seeking alternative methods of teaching and testing French, and outlined the idea of the graded syllabus and tests. In December there was a second meeting, at which some ten schools were represented. We discussed the target group for the first test and decided that Level 2 should be our starting point, aimed at thirteen-plus pupils, notably those who would probably discontinue the language. Also agreed was the idea of a proficiency certificate, and it was decided to approach the University of York for short-term sponsorship.

There was a deliberate decision to produce the tests before producing a closely defined syllabus. Our first Level 2 test was produced by March 1977, and administered in June 1977. Plans were made to add Levels 1 and 3 in 1978 and Level 4 (CSE Mode 3) in 1979. Some attempts were made to set up a similar scheme in German. The test papers were printed, rather than duplicated, as was the certificate. The services of a sympathetic graphic designer were obtained free.

Method of working

Meetings are held immediately after school at the Language Teaching Centre, at least once a month, more frequently when there are deadlines and during the testing period. Since there is no printed syllabus, it is important that all teachers who are intending to administer the tests participate in writing them. It is equally important that all participating teachers attend standardisation meetings. With all four levels now in operation, the meetings are held approximately fortnightly during May and June.

The tests are written at home, then discussed, altered or accepted by the meeting. One member is 'in charge' of each level, overseeing the writing, the production and the moderation of that level. Level 4 is produced as a CSE Mode 3, accepted by the Yorkshire Regional Examinations

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Board. The extra work involved in this is shared by three or four members of the working party. The official administration is to be rotated from school to school.

In 1979, Michael Buckby withdrew as chairman of the working party, but is still available for advice. We now have a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer appointed from the members of the working party.

The possibility of a Level 5 - a GCE Mode 3? - is now being mooted, and we are searching for methods of testing reading comprehension and, in particular, writing at this level. We would also like to produce fully defined syllabuses for Levels 1 to 3. To accomplish this we are considering seeking short secondment for one or two members.

Finance

Costs of printing are covered by an entry charge to schools. Funds were increased by the sale of test papers to many interested enquirers. The LEA has at no point been asked for money.

Numbers involved

1977-79: some fifteen schools have taken the tests, involving 1,000 pupils.

German

As information about the Graded Tests for French, developed by the Language Teaching Centre of York University, became disseminated, a group of local teachers approached the Language Materials Development Unit with a request that a Waystage Examination should be developed for German. It was agreed at the outset that there should be a syllabus. The first step, therefore, was to study the Defined Content Syllabuses of the Nuffield Languages Project, and the Graded Syllabuses prepared by the Association of Teachers of German in the province of British Columbia, Canada. The group also considered the Threshold Level of the Council of Europe and the Waystage. It was decided that the level of this examination should be approximately halfway between beginning German and the standard most pupils reach by the time they take CSE or 'O' level. It took the best part of a year to reach this stage, and during this time three or four meetings were held at the LMDU. These were arranged for convenient times after school.

Once a syllabus had been defined, which everybody thought they could teach towards, using the materials they already had, the group turned its mind to deciding which types of test to include in its examination. When the form of the examination had been agreed, it was decided to make a start by writing the reading comprehension tests. Each member of the group wrote a complete examination, the most suitable elements being selected by common consent from each. After this the same procedure was followed for the listening comprehension and finally for the oral test. In this way, over a period of months, the complete examination was constructed.

The LMDU was fortunately in a position to be able to contribute towards the travelling expenses of members of the group and to provide a typing and duplicating service.

The certificate

Everyone felt that the certificate should look impressive, even if it had no official status. We therefore constituted ourselves 'The York Schools German Examination Committee' in order to give the certificate a heading. We also provided space for at least three signatures to be placed on it, and wrote out in full on the reverse side a statement of what the pupil who had obtained it was able to do.

Materials

The LMDU expects to make available the syllabus and the examination during the year 1980/81. Teaching materials leading towards this and other German graded tests are being developed and it is hoped that these will be generally available.

CO-ORDINATION

The first attempt to co-ordinate information on a national scale was the setting up of a small specialist conference by CILT in March 1978. At this time there were nine groups in existence, and descriptions of their work were distributed by CILT under the name of 'T' papers.

By the time CILT decided to hold a second, much larger conference in April 1979, the number of groups had swelled to 40, and interest in Graded Objectives was clearly growing at a fast pace. The reports of the working parties at this conference (Methods of Testing, Syllabus Design, Sixteen-plus Examinations and Methods and Materials for teaching)* were widely circulated, together with addresses and details of the work of groups.

The conference also set up a standing committee, known as the Co-ordinating Committee for Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (GOML), which would be serviced by CILT and would meet three times a year. CILT would also continue to hold a reference collection of syllabuses and tests, to extend the range of 'T' papers (currently 31), and provide information to enquirers on any aspect of graded objectives.

Work undertaken by Co-ordinating Committee

The Committee decided that its work should proceed on two fronts:

(a) to encourage new developments
(b) to provide information and advice for beginners.

Information gathered by the Committee is circulated by means of newsletters. In the first such newsletter (November 1979), readers were brought up to date with the latest information from working groups, and one or more members of each group offered to talk to new groups about their experience with graded objectives. The second newsletter (March 1980) contained reports of working parties set up by the Committee on the following topics:

1. Dissemination of information: outline of an experimental in-service course on Graded Objectives
2. Pupil profiling
3. Syllabus design at Levels 3, 4 and 5
4. Co-operation with examining boards.

This newsletter was circulated to all working groups known to CILT (55 as at 1 May 1980), modern languages advisers, examining bodies and other interested parties - in all about 250 addressees.

Since a number of groups had experienced practical problems with oral testing, in June 1980 the Committee organised a weekend working meeting on Oral Testing with reference to graded tests, kindly sponsored by grants from the Schools Council and the Mary Glasgow Trust Fund. The reports from this meeting have been circulated in GOML Newsletter 3. It is hoped in future newsletters to include reports from teachers who have successfully adapted or produced teaching materials for pupils working for graded tests.

Members of the Committee have also been much in demand to talk to groups of teachers interested in graded objectives in areas where schemes are not already in operation.

Other ways in which information has been disseminated

A number of in-service courses have been mounted by advisers, teacher trainers, Teachers' Centres, universities and colleges: ranging from one-off meetings to weekly courses of up to eight weeks. In addition BALT has organised two very successful weekend residential courses, and the MLA has held a number of one-day regional meetings.

Members of working groups have given generously of their time to talk to nascent groups, or to contribute to DES courses and Association conferences.

*See Appendix IV.

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The Future

Tests and certificates have been an integral part of the graded objectives schemes from the outset. There is no doubt that a large amount of anecdotal evidence now reinforced by the more statistically reliable evidence coming from the York/Leeds Schools Council Project, testifies to their effectiveness. Candidates enjoy receiving their certificates; even apparently quite sophisticated or otherwise recalcitrant pupils evince a great deal of satisfaction in this tangible proof of their success. Candidates who have failed seem to be just as motivated as those who succeed and appear to look forward to succeeding at another attempt. Many teachers, then, feel that the certificates are an indispensable part of the system. Others have expressed the opinion that it is the change of syllabus and the consequent requirement to teach languages as something much nearer genuine communication than has been hitherto customary that are important. For them the tests and certificates are significant aids to perseverance but their importance is secondary. Similar thoughts have been expressed by colleagues from the European mainland who question our preoccupation with assessment and point out that they are introducing new ideas either by the introduction of new national syllabuses (eg Finland) or by the production of new teaching materials (Austria, Hesse). In the United Kingdom, however, we are preoccupied by the need for national qualifications arrived at by public examinations taken at age sixteen-plus in a way that few of our European partners are. There are many social and historical reasons for this and it may all be very regrettable. It remains true, however, that we shall not in the foreseeable future see a reduction of the influence of public examinations on teaching in secondary schools. It is up to us therefore to make that influence as benign as possible. At present public examinations have an overriding effect on curricular content and teaching styles. The fact that most graded tests have been used with the less able, non-examination classes is evidence of this. Teachers cannot, quite properly, afford to jeopardise pupils' public examinations chances by using them as guinea pigs in new teaching schemes. If we are, then, to change content and styles in modern language teaching we must change the public examinations. Otherwise, graded objectives defined in behavioural terms will remain an option for the less able, those deemed incapable of being entered for the 'real' examinations, CSE and GCE. Some schemes do appear to be limiting themselves in this way but most firmly reject the idea.

There are at present some 50 schemes in various stages of development. About twenty or so have produced syllabuses and tests. Over the next few years many of the others will do the same. It is expected that most of these will owe a great deal to the schemes already working but also each one will add something of its own and each will represent the outcome of the considered discussions of groups of teachers in their own regions. In this way there will continue to grow up a large number of definitions of the levels which will have many common elements but which will also show regional variations. At the same time those groups which have been in operation longest will be reaching the point of producing levels equivalent to present public examinations. York has already done this and at least three more schemes are on the point of producing CSE Mode 3 examinations which are part of their graded test series. To a certain extent this progression is forced on teachers. As has been said it has been a fairly common experience for graded examination schemes to produce much larger groups opting to continue French than was so before. In some cases the change has been dramatic.[1]

As more than one teacher has said: 'one cannot provoke an interest and a desire to go on learning a language and then tell the pupils they cannot continue'. They expect to be able to go on for a further two years to some sort of public examination. Many of the existing CSE's are not of the right type, hence the need for a Mode 3 CSE in the same spirit as their previous grades. In this way a public examination has been produced, and others will be produced, by pupil pressure from those wishing to continue in a way they have found congenial and successful.

Sometimes teachers have had complaints from the more able pupils who have, in general, not been engaged on graded examination courses. They find the public examination syllabuses less rewarding and less practical. Some teachers too feel dissatisfied with public examination requirements when they compare them with those of the new syllabuses. One can expect that Mode 3 'O' levels will arise in response to this situation. Once these are accepted by the boards then the way is open for the top half of the ability range to follow graded objectives courses as well. In this case the provision of the examination will produce the candidates, whereas, with the CSE, the situation was the other way round. In the present circumstances this would always remain a relatively small minority of candidates. One must not forget that sixteen years after prose translation became non-compulsory at 'O' level the majority of candidates are still entered for that paper by their teachers. But the present circumstances may change. The examining boards, like the Inspectorate, are very sympathetic to any developments which are likely to lead to more people learning languages effectively for a longer period. That would undoubtedly create problems of staffing and the provision of materials but fortunately those problems are not within the scope of this study.

In the medium term future two things may help the development of the scheme. The new proposals for the amalgamation of CSE and GCE have mentioned the criterion referencing of grades. At present we have no idea what this might mean in practice but, in modern languages at least, the graded objectives scheme has provided practical examples of how it can be done and the new criteria could well be realised in terms compatible with the spirit of the scheme. It would seem that working parties involved are well placed to help in the definition of criteria which would represent the grades in a new CSE/'O' level examination. Some have experience of producing grades up to this level; many have been involved in discussions which have outlined a theoretical basis for such work. Harding and Naylor provide an excellent starting point based upon long experience with the Oxfordshire scheme. In this way the continuation of locally defined early levels and nationally defined later levels could be made compatible.

The second favourable circumstance is the probable evolution of sixth-form qualifications. 'A' level in modern languages has remained remarkably resistant to change over the past twenty years and the accelerating fall in the number of candidates cannot be unconnected with it. N and F has died but this does not mean that 'A' level will remain untouched. New ideas arising from the N and F studies are being elaborated.[2] There is a growth in 'A/O' courses, many of which a most unlike previous sixth-form courses. It seems very likely that the demand for a two-stage course in post-'O' level work mirrored by these developments will grow. If that is so then these could well represent the higher levels of a graded objectives scheme - the ones that could be considered as university entrance qualifications. It is certainly true that any opportunity to halt the decline in post-'O' level modern language learning in our schools should be grasped as firmly as possible.

Two things should be kept very much in mind. In our preoccupation with the needs of language learning in schools we must not lose sight of the needs of adult learners and their teachers. In working out a graded system which will provide our school pupils with the sort of school-leaving qualifications society has come to expect from them we should ensure that the tests are not purely school-based or exclusively aimed at one age group. The principle that graded objectives represent a ladder for all learners should not be forgotten.

Secondly, the involvement of teachers in defining syllabuses and producing tests has been invaluable. The teachers themselves have found it to be one of the best forms of in-service training they have had - having to question what they are teaching, defend their opinions with colleagues and produce tests that are adequate assessments but also organisationally practicable. Their participation has ensured that syllabuses reflect the practical realities of the classroom. It is of vital importance that as the graded objectives schemes evolve, a place should be found for its continuing involvement of practising teachers.

There is a wider perspective which should also be taken into account. Communicative objectives have for some time influenced the teaching of English as a foreign language. This area of language teaching has long been neglected by teachers of other languages in this country who remain remarkably ignorant of the wealth of imaginative materials that have been produced particularly in the last ten years for the teaching of EFL. We would with great profit consult such courses as Starting Strategies , one of the few courses for beginners with a notional/functional framework, and the courses of Keith Morrow and Keith Johnston, Communicate and Approaches as well as Keith Morrow's work for the RSA on testing communicative objectives. Much of this work relies heavily on ideas originating from the Council of Europe Modern Language Project.

As has been said, many of the graded objectives groups have been inspired by the work of the Council of Europe and none can now fail to be influenced by it. Many groups throughout Europe have been similarly inspired and have set up projects of various sorts. In Summer 1979 the Committee for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe called a meeting of representatives of these projects from a number of countries. That meeting enabled a fruitful exchange of ideas and experience to take place. It was also decided that study groups should visit projects in various countries to see how they worked on the ground. Representatives from the United Kingdom were members of different groups which visited Finland, Austria, Germany and Portugal during 1980 talking to project organisers and teachers and visiting schools to see lessons being taught. Two similar groups visited England and Scotland. It is hoped that other visits will be made in subsequent years.

The graded objectives groups in this country are then by no means alone either in their methods, materials or objectives. We should therefore look to greater co-operation with these other groups whose outlook and aims are so similar to our own. Modern linguists above all should be internationally minded. We should seek actively to share ideas and experiences with teachers of EFL in this country and with our colleagues in mainland Europe. It is important, as we have said several times, to produce a system which is sensitive to local needs and in which teachers can take an effective part. This should not preclude, however, the possibility of arriving at some harmonisation of objectives within Europe as a whole so that qualifications obtained in one country might bear at least some resemblance to those obtained in another.

Such considerations may well be in a remoter future. Our immediate concern, and one which has the possibility of success, is to see graded objectives accepted as part of the official examination system in this country.

NOTES

(1) See Appendix III.

(2) Study Group of Hampshire teachers: French 16-19: a new perspective, Hodder & Stoughton, 1980.

Appendix I:

'An Alternative Model for Modern Language Examinations'

This article first appeared in 1974 in the Audio-Visual Language Journal (now the British Journal of Language Teaching), in a special issue on Testing and Examinations. It is thus an ur-article, and is reproduced here for historical interest.

Current debate about modern language teaching is mainly concentrated on the following themes:

(1) The opening-up of opportunities to learn one or more foreign languages to all, regardless of ability or age[1].

(2) The individualisation of learning materials and examinations for different groups. Though CSE examinations, particularly Mode 3, have made this a possibility, many of these are in reality but watered down versions of GCE forms of examination and little radical rethinking has been done.

(3) The definition of syllabuses[2].

(4) The reform of school examinations at sixteen-plus and eighteen-plus.

If the forms of sixteen-plus examinations at present being tested by the four consortia of examining boards were to be officially adopted, they would do little to satisfy the needs implied in the current debate. The examinations do not look likely to cater for all the pupils in the range because of the level of skills involved (particularly in writing) and they assume a continuation of the present irrational break between pre- and post-sixteen-plus work. While there is an urgent need for the definition of a variety of standards of achievement above and below GCE 'O' level so that learners, both school pupils and adults, can make real use of limited L2 acquisition in contact with native speakers and writers and be encouraged to pursue their studies to higher levels, the new proposals suggest a terminal examination at sixteen-plus, too long a course for some and too early an end to language study for others. They would probably also have a disastrous effect on the already unhappy situation of languages other than French and, finally, they do nothing for Further Education and adult learners. The case against such a sixteen-plus examination has been argued elsewhere[3]. What we should like to do here is to suggest what an alternative model might look like in practice. The details are by no means intended to be definitive but we hope they might form a basis for debate by teachers who are engaged in the day to day job of teaching students of all ages and levels of ability. It is essential that a debate on the practical aspects of radical alternatives to sixteen-plus be started.

The scheme would contain, say, six to eight levels which would cover the range up to 'A' level grade A and possibly beyond. Each level would have defined, measurable aims and objectives. While each would be self-contained, each level would at the same time point the way forward to the next one so that a student could feel that there was a recognisable road to follow marked by definite points at which he could rest or even leave the road altogether and still have some worthwhile usable experience to take with him. It should also be possible to provide several interchangeable tests at the same level which varied in content to make them suitable for a wide age range of students but kept standard the actual skills tested. It is very important to emphasise in any such scheme the principle that it is not necessary to pass an examination at each level before going on to the next one. Students according to their inclinations, abilities and the time available would aim at whatever level was considered best. In this way the average school child would take no more public examinations in languages than he does at present and it might be that some really high flyers would take fewer since they might successfully aim for the top from the start.

Some new principles have been invoked in deciding the content and skills to be taught. A few of these are implied in present examinations techniques such as assignments and role-playing but others are not. Many learners find oral production almost as difficult as written production, whereas it has already been shown that pupils can reach a much higher level of comprehension. Given the limited time available for oral practice in the classroom and that accurate oral production is not in fact as necessary in a foreign language situation as some would claim, there is surely a case for the development of other aids to communication. These might be:

(a) The capacity to manage in a bilingual conversation where each participant speaks in his own language and is understood by the other.

(b) An awareness of the redundancy principle that you do not need to understand every single word in order to receive the message. Strategies for getting the most out of a difficult language situation should be taught.

(c) Non-linguistic strategies (pointing, gestures).

(d) Non-structured language acceptable to the native speaker.

(e) The ability to use non-grammatical and possibly non-accurate language (even a sort of pidgin). The aim here would be to encourage the student to use the accurate structures he knows and to be willing in addition to risk using a wider area of non-grammatical utterances outside his competence. As he progressed, the frontier of accuracy would (hopefully) advance. It would however be extremely important for the student to be aware of which field of language he was operating in. We must teach people to take risks and learn from the native listener's corrections of his possible errors.

Other skills will be implied in the descriptions of the levels.

Level 1

Target population

(a) Low ability classes in secondary schools on one or two year courses not studying for examinations at present: some might perhaps be studying two languages in succession.

(b) Sixth form non-language specialists short course of one year or less.

(c) Would-be tourists in evening classes.

(d) Language specialists wanting a brief aperçu at another language.

Aims

(a) To provide a reasonable goal for 80 to 90 percent of the population.

(b) To show learners how to cope in a foreign country while possessing very few linguistic tools.

Objectives

Writing: none;
Reading: public notices (in stations, museums, cinemas, etc), cafeteria menus;
Listening: times, quantities, prices; the answers received to simple requests in stations, shops, hotels, camp sites, youth hostels;
bilingual conversations (where each participant speaks in his own language); this would include training in the use of clearly spoken possibly simplified English to help the other speaker;

strategies for working out the extent to which you can pick out what you do understand and make some provisional sense of it;

Speaking: a dozen or so phrases mainly of an interrogative sort to cover initial requests for information (time, direction, etc) or satisfaction of needs (food, shelter, etc). Many of these would be verbless and 'non-structural' as far as the learner was concerned. *(deux bières, s'il vous plaît, je voudrais...)*;
official information (*je suis x: mon adresse est y; ma date de naissance est z*);
ability to pick out at least some unfamiliar passages from matter heard and repeat them approximately for clarification (*je ne comprends pas...*);
numbers up to 100 to cope with official time, dates and prices.

Content

250 words of which 50 plus numbers up to 100 are for productive use.

The objectives of this first unit are so basic that it is likely there would be little need for variation in examination tests to cope with differences in the ages of the students. Differences in teaching materials and techniques would probably be sufficient.

Level 2

Target population

(a) As for Level 1 with exception of lowest ability students and those with a minimum of time or inclination.

(b) Those who at present drop out of or gain a Grade 3 or below in CSE courses but who would tackle a two- to three-year course.

(c) GCE grade 6 equivalent sixth-formers, eg science students generally able and motivated but not particularly good linguists on two-year courses.

(d) Those pupils who intend to reach at least this level in two or more languages by age sixteen-plus.

Aims

To provide a reasonable goal for a two to three year course for most people who have something more than a passing interest in beginning to learn a language but who have a limited time to study.

Objectives

Writing: none;

Reading: captions to photographs in the press, newspaper notices of cinema performances etc (including relevant standard abbreviations), sports results, etc;

reading for enjoyment of simplified material outside classes;

reading of letters from French correspondents where a restricted vocabulary has been agreed on; for adults in evening classes such a system could be set up as part of twinned town arrangements;

the beginnings of deciphering skill could be taught (analogous to the oral skills in Level 1) where students are taught strategies for getting something from written material which contains a large unknown element. Maps and tourist brochures are frequently linguistically complicated but might yield to this treatment.

Listening: an extension of general aural comprehension to cover the wider vocabulary implied at this level;

sixth-form scientists, for example, might have labelled diagrams to follow while hearing the simple recounting of a process;

listening to tape recordings received from friends abroad in the same way as the letter reading mentioned above[4];

Speaking: the acquisition of some structures for limited creativity: gender, number, present tense, compound future (in French) in those parts of the verb most needed, word order in simple sentences (German);

simple ways of expressing likes, dislikes, interest, pleasure, intention;

information seeking now more complicated, eg *pouvez-vous me dire...*

some interchange in the foreign language but bilingual conversation would still be largely relied on;

Content: 1,000 words of which 400 would be for productive use.

Level 3

Target population

(a) Pupils who at present get a good CSE or low GCE grade.

(b) Sixth-form linguists one year intensive course.

(c) Evening class students (some of whom may have taken one or more earlier levels) two to four years.

(d) Pupils who intend to reach this level in two or more languages by age sixteen-plus.

Aims

The aim in this and subsequent levels will be to build upon the skills begun in previous ones. Speech will still be limited but aural and reading comprehension should be at least those of present good 'O' level candidates.

Objectives

Writing: use of notes, etc, to help students to remember heard or read material;
notes as a test of listening comprehension;

Reading: more reading for enjoyment and/or information of appropriate material. Further practice in deciphering non-simplified material will be given so that students can see the functions of words in a sentence and be able to select the essential ones to look up. In this way students can be given the confidence to tackle material previously considered too difficult for this level of language learning. Journalism will still present a problem as it is deceptively difficult for the foreigner.

Listening: as for reading. Perhaps some beginnings in learning to understand the common slang or colloquial expressions, the normal forms of everyday speech as opposed to those of the sympathetic foreigner making allowances for a non-native listener. Bilingual conversations should now be possible on most general subjects provided techniques for dealing with unknown words and forms are taught;

Speaking: short, simple conversations on public (weather, task in hand, transport, tourist sites) and semi-private matters (family, home, job);
longer, more personal conversations would still rely at least partly on bilingual techniques;
greater confidence in initiating conversation, techniques for exploiting a foreign situation in order to increase language facility;
ability to handle certain parts (but not necessarily complete paradigms, of other tenses (perfect and imperfect in French, common subjunctives in Spanish, Italian);
pronoun objects to give more flexibility and naturalness to expression.

Content
2,000 words of which 1,000 would be for productive use.

There is not space to go into the same detail for the remaining levels. Level 4 would be reached by present Grade 2 to 4 'O' level candidates in four to five years. The content and skills would carry the same emphases as the first three units with some additional skills such as total comprehension of a 'telephone voice' (ie a voice signal of restricted harmonic range and giving no help through gesture or facial expression) and possibly gist comprehension of some radio programme of a general sort. Some inklings of how to judge a person's mood or reaction by the words or intonation he uses might be given here. For productive use, ways of expressing concepts like hypothesis, doubt, denial, uncertainty, might be added. These would imply in French conditional sentences and some use of the subjunctive which is quite widely employed in everyday spoken French and, rather unnaturally, virtually banned from 'O' level. Cultural information would inevitably be conveyed by the content of every level but from Level 4 we might expect it to form part of the assessment.

Level 5 would be aimed at those who had done well at Level 4, wanted to carry their interest a little further but who did not particularly want to specialise in languages in the sixth form. Level 6 would provide the qualification for entrance to higher education now provided by 'A' level. Levels 7 and 8, if they were to exist, would provide for people studying outside educational institutions the sort of qualification earned by full time students in colleges of education, universities, polytechnics and so on.

In framing these units we have been very much influenced by the needs of French and German. We must remember however that Spanish and Russian are already widely taught in schools and we want to encourage the growth of teaching in many more languages. The next two or three decades may see a wider spread of Chinese and Arabic for example. In those cases where tourism is restricted by cost and political factors, the emphasis in the units might need to fall on different sorts of skills - more receptive than productive perhaps or more concerned with particular aspects of life in the relevant countries.

The contents of the levels we have suggested will undoubtedly be found unsatisfactory in varying degrees by many. This reflects the extreme difficulty of deciding what constitutes different levels of language attainment. More research needs to be done. We do not know with any certainty, for example, whether the skills we suggest can be attained within the word counts we propose. Hitherto, standards of range and accuracy have tended to be expressed with reference only to the native speaker in the country concerned. Clearly, other standards must be determined for non-native speakers not necessarily using the language in the foreign country. All these details would need to be discussed freely and in depth by teachers before they were enshrined in some sort of examination syllabus and thereafter it would be extremely important to keep them under constant review.

NOTES

(1) See, inter alia, Systems development in adult language learning, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1973.

(2) See Survey of Curricula and Performance in Modern Languages, C V James and S Rouve, CILT, 1973.

(3) Brian W Page: 'An Alternative to 16+', Modern Languages, LV 1, March 1974.

(4) Mr B Jones of Homerton College, Cambridge has worked this system with great success.

Appendix II:

Working Party Reports

Editors' note:

> *The recommendations or comments of the four working parties are in no way agreed policy documents but expressions of opinion by the individuals concerned to be noted and perhaps taken up and acted upon by the conference as a whole. Some of these opinions have now been overtaken by events; others are not, in practice, in harmony with what graded objectives groups have decided to do in their areas. Others again do not seem very explicit outside the context of the discussions at the time.*
>
> *They should therefore be taken for what they are: expressions of opinion which would not necessarily meet with the approval of all the members of the conference but which are valuable as points from which a discussion may emerge.*

Working Part B discussed methods of testing and recommended as follows:

1. That there is a need to define levels more closely so that schemes and individual teachers can talk to each other in a common language, and so that tests and test items (and possibly materials?) can be exchanged; but to define in a way that allows for (a) local variation and (b) change.
2. That banking of test items could give some centralised provision and contribute expert knowledge of testing, while allowing for local flexibility. It was suggested that a working party might be set up to study item banking for testing early levels of foreign language learning, to include in its brief consideration of the cost of providing such a service, the cost of using it, the time scale that would be necessary, modes of access, incentives for teachers to contribute items, etc. (Later discussion in plenary session queried the realism of such a suggestion, in view of financial constraints, and it was suggested that such a move might be premature.)

Working Party C considered principles and methods of syllabus design, bearing in mind, at the Chairman's suggestion, a distinction between language content (seen as concrete but limiting) and language process (seen as generative and open-ended). It was accepted that language was dynamic and that language learning activities should therefore be open-ended.

The following suggestions were made:

1. That indications of teaching style should appear in the syllabus.
2. That the syllabus should be creative rather than static, covering perhaps more than was likely to be dealt with by the average.
3. That pupil perspectives as well as teacher perspectives should appear in the syllabus.
4. That the syllabus should not be a testing syllabus but that different levels of performance would be determined from the syllabus.
5. That the sum of the whole was in fact very much more than the separate parts.
6. That the syllabus should cover the gap that seems to exist at the moment between extant syllabuses and teaching materials, ie make explicit the stages of thinking which have been left out between the two.
7. That the linguistic competence of the teacher was most important (there was some fear that the detailed syllabus might give the contrary impression).
8. Communicative needs should be given priority - grammatical needs follow.
9. That a syllabus might be constructed from the frustrations of those pupils recently returned from exchanges; this might help to establish the minimum needed for survival in the foreign country.
10. That the syllabus must continue to identify pupils' communicative needs and realise these through activity, following the principle that language is a tool and not an end in itself.
11. That teachers should anticipate learners' future needs by teaching them how to learn.
12. That the medium of communication should be the foreign tongue, but that there might be a psychological need occasionally to use the mother tongue.

3. That different language study skills should be developed (eg how to use a dictionary).

14. That the different learning styles of pupils should be recognised.
15. That the syllabus should be pick-and-mix style: the levels should not necessarily be spelt out, but teachers should be able to make their own selection. That language skills should not be considered as totally 'discrete' since this destroys the unity of the communicative event.
16. The input could not always be controlled and that a tight control was not desirable.
17. That the ends achieved might well be different from the means of the learning activities (eg emphasis on oral skills may in fact improve written skills).
18. That the role of the teacher in the communicative classroom needed to be studied, and more in-service training provided.
19. That criteria needed to be established for the comparison of syllabuses.
20. That the question of how prescriptive the sequencing of the syllabus should be, needed to be examined.

Working Party D considered the relation of graded tests to sixteen-plus examinations and made the following recommendation:

That a working party composed of representatives of those elaborating graded objectives schemes and of the examining boards be set up to look at the specific issues arising from the need eventually to integrate the two systems. The working party should address itself to the following areas of concern:

1. The relationship of graded objective tests to:
    - (a) the present dual system
    - (b) GCSE
2. The question of grades, and how they would mesh into the system
3. The sequence of criteria-based levels
4. The place of minority languages, with possible adjustments to cater for them
5. The writing of an alternative GCSE syllabus
6. Which of the levels in Brian Page's model (outlined in the brief for this working party) should be considered initially. It was recommended that levels 3, 4 and 5 should be considered for integration into

either system but that Levels 1 and 2 might be left to local initiative (ie would not need to be nationally valid).

7. How examination boards could support local groups, eg by putting expertise at their disposal
8. The financial implications for schools/LEAs of the administration of tests alongside the existing system.

Practical considerations (funding, membership, timetable)

1. Funding:

   (a) It was suggested that CILT might make an initial approach to the examination boards, since the latter have money available for research.

   (b) That other sources might be investigated, eg trust funds.

2. Membership:

   In the interests of efficiency, the Working Party should be small (six to eight people, with invited consultants).

   Up to four members might be representatives of examining boards.

   An approach should be made to the Association of Secretaries and the equivalent GCE Association to ask them to nominate two representatives each.

3. Timetable:

   (a) A tightly defined brief should be submitted to the examination boards when they are invited to contribute finance and discuss membership. At the same time, an estimate of the costing of the first year's work should be submitted.

   (b) The first meeting of the Working Party should take place in September 1979, with CILT acting as convenor.

   (c) There should be six full working-day meetings per annum (possibly two days together, or a weekend conference).

   (d) The Working Party should submit an annual progress report.

   No time limit was specified.

Working Party E considered the question of methods and materials for teaching.

Methods:

1. The group agreed on the following definition of student involvement:

   That the student should understand what is going on, what the objectives are, how the language is working, and know when he has succeeded (ie self-assessment).

2. There was an interest in 'diagnostic/remedial' approaches, but little evidence of a breaking-away from the traditional lock-step approach.
3. It was felt that the recent emphasis on communicative functions had brought about a fundamental change in methods, involving more verbal interaction, and centred on the pupil rather than the teacher. In this connection the teacher may have the dilemma of wanting to make maximum use of the foreign language in the classroom, while feeling that a certain amount of English is necessary to ensure full student involvement.
4. There was substantial commitment to group/paired/individual work at the exploitation stage, and it was felt that the latter might provide a basis for breaking the lock-step to some extent, but there was no evident commitment to make substantial moves in this area. (During discussion of this report, the feeling was strongly expressed that it was unrealistic to place much hope at present in autonomous learning.)

Materials:

1. Teachers at present seem to cannibalise existing courses, and it was suggested that time might be saved if publishers would do the same.
2. There was a feeling that there were already sufficient 'compleat' courses on the market, and that publishers should concentrate rather on exploitation materials, particularly self-help materials (eg sheets of thumbnail pictures for use on workcards and worksheets) and unified resources packages based on topics, with ideas for presentation, exercises and reading material.
3. There was interest in the possibility of a designers' 'visual reference' for language teaching.
4. It was suggested that teachers' centres might be appropriate centres for the development of new materials based on agreed syllabus content, to which individual teachers might add according to their own needs.

Methods of Information Exchange

All working parties were asked to consider this topic briefly. It seemed to be generally agreed that CILT would perform a useful service by continuing to compile and circulate descriptions of GREX projects (known as T-papers) and that these should if possible be revised annually. It was also suggested that LEA advisers might be able to serve as information points by holding eg materials/tests from various schemes that could not readily be distributed on a wider scale. (CILT already holds such a collection, for reference only.) The following suggestions were also made:

1. That there should be a further conference within the next year, to carry discussion further; it should be preceded by study, on the part of those to attend, of existing schemes, and by circulation of relevant papers, so that it could consider such matters as a draft definition of Level 1 on an informed basis.
2. That items or whole tests should be collected and subsequently circulated (with annotations) for comment by members of the various groups.
3. That the proposed co-ordinating committee should review particular schemes and comment on them, on the basis of its knowledge of other schemes; and that it should also work on definitions of levels.
4. On the question of authenticity, Frau Ebba-Maria Dudde of the Goethe-Institut and Francois Weiss of the Institut Français would be glad to assist any group with regard to the 'Germanness' or 'Frenchness' of their proposed materials. Additionally teachers of German interested in an exchange of ideas on methods and materials might like to contact Frau Dudde with a view to arranging a suitable time and place for a meeting (eg in the Midlands).[1]

NOTE

1. This meeting took place in April 1980 in Birmingham.

Appendix III:

Evaluation of Graded Objectives and Tests

With the help of a grant from the Schools Council, a closely controlled experiment was carried out in the school year 1979-80 to evaluate the effects of graded objectives and tests on pupils, parents and teachers. Experimental and control groups were established in schools in York and Leeds and appropriate tests of attitudes towards French and language learning aptitude were developed and administered. The main results can be summarised thus:

The Pupils:

The control and experimental pupils began the year with almost identical attitudes towards French and aptitudes for foreign language learning. The experimental pupils were then introduced to the notion of graded tests and were taught accordingly. The control pupils continued with French in whatever ways were normal in their schools.

By the end of the school year, there were marked differences between the two groups:

(a) the experimental pupils showed very significantly more positive attitudes to learning French than the control pupils;
(b) the results in Leeds and York were very similar, but the gains were slightly more marked in York. Given that this was the first year of graded tests in Leeds and the third in York, this suggests that the benefits of the approach are felt immediately, that they last and that they increase with time;
(c) the more positive attitudes of the experimental pupils were shown equally at all points of the aptitude scale;
(d) experimental pupils who failed a graded test proved to have attitudes as positive as those who had passed;
(e) many more experimental pupils than control pupils chose to carry on with French after options: 62 percent as against 45 percent.

The Parents

Both groups of parents began the year with very similar attitudes. In general, parental attitudes towards French were very positive and encouraging. During the year, the control parents became less positive while the experimental parents became more positive. The most likely explanation for this improvement is a combination of:

(a) information to experimental parents about their children's learning goals and their success in achieving them; and
(b) the attitudes of the two groups of pupils influencing their parents' attitudes in directions similar to their own.

The Teachers

Both groups of teachers expressed very positive attitudes towards the concept of graded objectives and tests, and there was little change in this over the year. For example, no teacher thought that the approach would lead to a lowering of standards, and a very large majority believed that pupils of all abilities would benefit. The effects of teaching courses and methods were also generally welcomed by teachers, as was the system of certification.

The final chapter of the report was written by the teachers involved in the experiment, in response to the rest of the report. Their classroom experience and professional judgement confirm the statistical findings. Their positive and optimistic assessment of the past and expectations for the future provide a most encouraging conclusion.

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Appendix IV:

Working Meeting on Oral Testing

Report of the Working Meeting held at the James Gracie Conference Centre, Birmingham, 6th - 8th June 1980. Organised by CILT and the GOML Co-ordinating Committee.

The meeting was opened by Brian Page, Chairman of the GOML Co-ordinating Committee. He expressed thanks to the Schools Council and the Mary Glasgow Trust, who had generously provided grants to enable the meeting to take place. He then outlined the background of the meeting: the GOML Co-ordinating Committee which had been set up at the CILT Conference on Graded Objectives in April 1979 had met three times during the academic year 1979/80, had so far produced two newsletters, and had organised the present meeting.

Contributions from representatives of groups

ILEA TESTS

June Farrel spoke about the ILEA tests, which are based on Eclair (the materials which had already been produced by ILEA teachers). The principles underlying the Speaking Test were culled from the Council of Europe and publications of David Wilkins. It was decided to base the tasks demanded of pupils on the Eclair materials. Thus Level 1 (taken after the first six units of the course) would set the following tasks:

factual information gathering
how to ask for things
answering questions about intentions
giving information about oneself

At Level 2 this would be expanded to:

more factual information
shopping tasks
intentions
being asked to offer something
further personal information, etc

The group wanted the tests to be as natural as possible and therefore to include role-playing and asking for information, not merely responding. Various methods of stimulation were used: symbols, visuals, and instructions (sometimes in English). When cards were experimented with, there was the problem of comparability of cards, so it was decided to produce a booklet. Another problem was that of creating a 'flow', so that the test did not consist of a set of completely disparate questions. The Level 1 sequence finally agreed was as follows: around the town - at the market - in the café - in the shop - talking about oneself. And for Level 2: at the station - on a picnic - buying clothes - being in pain on the way home - in a house (what is happening in various rooms) - at the cinema - where to meet. The present test booklet was expected to be used for several years.

Marking

Each question is marked on a three-point scale: 0 = task not accomplished, 1 = error but communication achieved, 2 = task satisfactorily accomplished. Teachers are given the following guide:

9-10 = high fluency
7-8 = reasonable fluency
5-6 = hesitant
3-4 = much stumbling
1-2 = very poor communication

Two marks are given for each question - one for communication, and one for the degree of fluency with which this is achieved. Thus 18/40 would be a pass, 36/40, a pass 'avec mention'.

Conduct of test

Pupils see the test booklet 24 hours before the test, with their teacher. The test is taken in the classroom, while the other pupils are working: it takes about five minutes. The pupils look at the booklet while the previous candidate is being tested. All the visuals are taken from the course.

OMLAC SPEAKING TEST

Peter Dickson then spoke about the OMLAC Speaking Test, which is a summative test lasting five minutes, and is awarded twenty percent of the marks for the whole test. The working party would like to raise this percentage in line with the ideas underlying the OMLAC syllabuses: that the syllabuses at Levels 1 and 2 are designed to influence teaching towards communicative competence. The tests are produced by members of the working parties who volunteer to write items. The format has varied considerably: sometimes it has depended on illustrations alone, sometimes on a combination of English instructions and pictures, and sometimes on symbols. However, it was found very difficult to make the drawings sufficiently clear. For example, a picture of, supposedly, a trolley in a supermarket, once produced the question 'Où est le chariot?' There had been a suggestion that something unpredictable should be introduced, but it was decided that this would not be suitable for Level 1.

Peter Dickson stressed that the OMLAC tests were still being developed, and that the working parties intended to keep experimenting with different ideas. They were trying, for example, to make the situations more authentic, one idea being the Identity Card Profile, in which the pupil assumes the identity of a French child, and is asked to give his name, address, etc, using formal information given on the card. Teachers were critical of the instructions-in-English approach, because they felt that pupils might attempt to translate. Among recent plans was one to amalgamate Levels 1 and 2, and to standardise all languages at one level, while attempting to sequence, like the ILEA. Despite much effort, it was felt that there were still problems to which more work would have to be devoted. One of these was the link between teacher and pupil performance: a survey had shown that teacher behaviour ranged from strict interrogation to extreme relaxation. It had also become clear that the material circumstances of different groups of candidates varied enormously, some suffering a great deal of distracting noise in the classroom. Other findings from this survey were:

- a good deal of automatic, well-drilled behaviour
- some phrases which echoed throughout a test, eg 'je voudrais'
- little attention to gender
- wide use of English
- mispronunciation which seemed to reflect poor classroom methods, eg 'la banque' = 'le ban-cue'

In the case of the last example, it was felt that acceptable pronunciation should be defined as that which a native speaker was likely to be able to understand. Difficulty was also found in making instructions clear to pupils. Teachers are therefore told to interpret instructions for weaker pupils.

The Oxfordshire teachers would like to feel that in this test, pupils could produce language which is contextualised, has a particular purpose, is authentic and performance-based, ie to get pupils to use all the language they have learnt.

LOTHIAN CONVERSATION TESTS

A talk was then given by Judith Hamilton, on the subject of the Lothian Conversation Tests, which were from the start designed to be tests of proficiency and not of achievement. At the Stage Test (elsewhere referred to as a Level) Lothian wanted a forward-looking test (dipstick readings) which would show the actual point along a continuum which the pupil had reached at the time of the test. The team was interested in communication, in trying to ensure that the pupil had a mastery of the system, and not merely a store of set-phrases. It was necessary therefore to look at the communicative functions the pupil would need to perform, and draw from these functions the necessary grammar. Pupils were NOT required to remember all the vocabulary, as, if asked, the teacher would provide words.

In the test situation, the Lothian team were attempting to represent either the foreign environment, or a French person in Scotland, or two English-speaking people agreeing to speak French. This latter suggestion aroused a lively debate. The pupils were not asked to play roles, but to be themselves, and perform tasks that could reasonably be expected of them in real life. For example, in real life, working class children do not buy train tickets, or go on picnics. The team wanted pupils to talk to each other, and therefore asked them to do it in French.

The Lothian tests are designed for all pupils and are to be taken voluntarily, when the pupil feels ready. There is no pass mark: the completion of a task constitutes a pass. Lothian is particularly concerned that test-content and methods should not have an adverse backwash effect on classroom practice. The team recognises the problem of set-phrase learning, but hopes that after two years of appropriate teaching, even very weak pupils will be able to organise for themselves the language with which they are familiar. The following examples of possible content were offered:

(a) two Scottish children discussing plans for the visit of a French penfriend
(b) two conflicting diaries which pupils have to use while trying to make arrangements

In answer to objections that these tasks were perhaps too difficult, with middle-class bias, Mrs Hamilton pointed out how difficult it was to find culture-free situations.

Experimental samples of paired tests were played, Lothian believing firmly that the best way to influence classroom practice is to put into the test those tasks which one would like to see practised in class. It was explained that pupils would choose their own partners, although this inevitably meant that a good pupil would receive little help from a weaker partner. Although doubts were expressed about the validity of pair-testing, it was nevertheless felt that at this stage all new ideas were to be encouraged.

THE EMREB SCHEME

The fourth speaker was Dr Roy Dunning from the School of Education of the University of Leicester, who spoke about the Feasibility Study set up by the East Midlands Regional Education Board, which he is directing. The EMREB scheme was designed for the whole ability range, and Level 1 would be taken after Year 1, etc. Like Lothian, this scheme is concerned to influence methodology. Reading and writing may be available for the more able at Level 1, but are intended to be supportive to the communicative role, and not a barrier to it. There would be no attempt to discriminate between the so-called 'skills'. What was being tested was ABILITY, and there must be enough instances of this ability, and over a period of time, so that it was seen not to be merely mechanical. The scheme did not reject role-playing, which it saw as necessary in view of the limited number of genuine communicative exchanges relating to the pupils' own real and personal lives.

No methodology was laid down, and there were no particular constraints on teachers: but the scheme was working towards a different form of assessment, which would not rely on an unequal relationship between teacher and pupils, but on a pupil-to-pupil exchange which would be monitored by the teacher. Progress cards would be issued, and the teacher would set up an exchange between pupils which would prove that they could do what the card said they could do.

With regard to the problem of stimulus, EMREB was using cue-cards and visuals (symbols), and pupils would be required to note down the results of conversations on special cards (to encourage pupils to listen to each other).

AMR TESTS

David Cross, from Archbishop Michael Ramsey School, London, pointed out that what is not easily examinable is usually devalued: it was therefore essential to examine oral skills, (a) for the effect on the pupils and (b) for the effect on the teachers. There was always a problem in trying to mark creativity, since such marking could only be subjective, but he felt that the subjectivity could be reduced by (a) a good marking scheme and (b) holding several interviews, and taking the mean score.

He felt that the tasks chosen could be syllabus-related at first, but later needed to have a more generally related, extended function. Candidate anxiety could be a problem but this could be reduced by (a) practice and (b) 'transparency', ie the pupil knowing what sort of question will occur.

The AMR tests were administered as follows: one minute per interview, with a pupil withdrawn from reading comprehension. One minute was allowed for preparation, but although the pupils would not know exactly what they would be tested on, they would have been given a skeletal outline the day before. Marking was done on the spot, according to criteria agreed beforehand with the staff as to what was/was not the message which had to be understood/conveyed. At the higher levels, there was much individualised study, and any teacher could act as an examiner to a pupil, who needed eight credits for a pass. Formal testing was being undertaken in the fourth year to provide feedback on validity. For this purpose a pupil was given one test on entry to and one on exit from the fourth year, the interviews being taped and the tapes marked.

YORKSHIRE REGIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD

The final formal contribution was given by Brian Park from the Yorkshire Regional Examinations Board. He pointed out that an examinations board has the following considerations in mind: validity, reliability, security, moderation and discrimination. As to whether tests should be norm- or criterion-referenced, the present public examination system was in any case a mixture. If graded tests were intended, like swimming certificates, to interest parents and generally assist motivation, they could remain relatively free; if, however, wider acceptability was to be sought, then the schemes would have to consider standards in the same way as public examinations boards. Mr Park agreed that the present situation whereby the teaching system was being adversely affected by the examinations system was unhealthy, but he wondered if it was in fact necessary to change the examinations syllabus in order to change teaching methods. He put forward his interpretation of government statements about the future of public examinations, and there was a lively debate on the subject of a common sixteen-plus examination, and particularly whether such an examination should have a common or branching syllabuses. While at present it did seem possible to establish grades in the GCE/CSE spectrum from a common examination, it had to be remembered that only 35 percent of the ability range is currently being examined in a modern language. Any new system would presumably have to cope with a much wider band of ability, and the problem would therefore be greater.

There was a strong feeling among some members of the meeting that any new examinations system should NOT be tied to any particular age: that Level 2 of a graded system might be equated with, say, Grade 7 or 8 on the new system, to be taken whenever the pupil was ready, and duly credited on any school-leaving certificate. Those able to attempt higher levels could do so, at any age. It might be possible to distinguish standards of excellence within the upper levels. Mr Park agreed that there were merits in this idea, though it was revolutionary, and pointed out that in any nationally accepted system it would be impossible for modern languages to act independently. It might, however, be possible to define subject areas, eg maths, where such an approach could be equally beneficial.

The remainder of the meeting was spent in discussion groups. There were four sessions, with the following general headings:

(1) Organisation and arrangement of oral tests
(2) Content of oral tests
(3) Conduct of oral tests
(4) Marking of oral tests

Inevitably there was much overlap in the discussion, and conflicting opinions in some areas. However the aim of this report is not be prescriptive, but to show what is being done, what problems have emerged, and how some of them are being tackled, with a view to encouraging further initiatives among all interested parties. This is essentially an open-ended debate.

1. Organisation and arrangement of tests

Step-by-step or end-of-year/stage

It was thought that there is an important distinction between summative proficiency tests (end-of-year/stage) and stage or step-by-step tests (whether used for continuous assessment or as an indication of progress) administered after individual units. Step-by-step tests test mastery of specific tasks, whereas summative proficiency tests should test ability to transfer (communicative skills). It was agreed that the mastery of specific tasks is useful, but that some greater element of 'communicative skill' should be tested at some stage. Step-by-step assessment, it was felt, can have a good backwash effect on teaching, and summative testing is also necessary with a cumulative subject. It was felt that, for the latter, the end-of-year test is easier to organise, and that perhaps the most practical start for a new group was to begin with summative testing and move on to step-by-step testing. It was important to negotiate with the pupils and let them see the point of what they were doing: the test should be a reward rather than a stick. It was felt that pupils like to make an 'event' out of a test, and give it a sense of occasion which makes the certificate worthwhile.

Length of test

York has one-and-a-half minutes for Levels 1 and 2, two-and-a-half minutes for Level 3; Northants three to four minutes; EMREB about five minutes; Lothian up to fifteen minutes, in pairs. It was felt that if step-by-step testing was done throughout the year, two minutes (or up to five minutes at the very most) was sufficient to test oral proficiency in a summative test, taking a sample of the material taught. At higher levels, tests should be longer to allow time for pupils to say more than the minimum. Since there would always be some drop-out, fewer pupils should allow more time per candidate. Leicester suggested testing two pupils together to cut down time, but this might present a problem with 'loners'; it was also felt to be undesirable to have two weak candidates working together, really unable to help each other.

Place

Practice is varied. Some teachers conduct tests in a corner of the room while the rest of the class do private work; others feel strongly that privacy is necessary, in view of the problem of the teacher having two jobs to do at once, and the undesirability of candidates hearing all previous examinees (though one group was not worried about the possibility of cheating, believing that pupils would forget what they heard in any case). It was suggested that stock cupboards or corridors (with the classroom door open) could be used if necessary. The supervision of the rest of the class could be undertaken by an assistant, another teacher with a free period, PGCE students borrowed from a local college or UDE, sixth formers, or if space allowed, classes could double up, or a senior teacher might take three or four classes in a hall for slides or some common activity.

When tests should be taken

It was felt strongly that except in exceptional circumstances step-by-step tests should be taken in class time or in the usual time allotted for school examinations. There should be no special treatment for French. At present many teachers were giving up lunch or break times, which was felt to be bad practice leading to loss of status. It was felt that what was needed was official recognition that timetabled space is essential for summative oral testing. This time might be during blocked school examinations, or language teachers might ask for time out on the analogy of biology/geography field trips. Or PGCE students might be employed to conduct tests. At present it seemed to be impossible to plan oral testing which would take longer than one class period, but this did not accord with the desire to give more importance to oral testing. Team-teaching and individualised learning might be useful.

Who should conduct tests

It was felt that tests conducted by the class teacher were easier to organise and likely to benefit nervous candidates. For summative tests another teacher from the department, or from a different school could be brought in. Cardiff had enlisted student help to conduct personal interviews in the oral test.

Cost

Tests are currently financed by (a) sales of materials, eg York, OMLAC, (b) LEA grants, (c) fees paid by individual schools out of departmental allowances. It was suggested that it might be possible to involve business firms. When setting up a group, it was felt to be important to have a single person or institution who would be responsible for the administration, but who would be well advised to delegate as much as possible, for example by sending one copy of the test to each school, which would carry out its own duplication. Interested groups of teachers could approach advisers, teacher trainers and examining boards for possible help. It was thought valuable to point out that groups setting up should not feel obliged to start from scratch, but should be encouraged to adapt and improve on work already done, selecting according to particular interests.

Information to pupils and parents

This was felt to be part of the negotiation with pupils, who might be given a piece of paper at the beginning of the year by the school or authority, explaining the course and its objectives. It was considered particularly important to give information about objectives and pupil progress to parents, and to explain the apparent phenomenon of high marks gained in French in comparison with other (norm-referenced) tests.

2. Content of Oral Tests

Tasks

Common tasks at Level 1 are: questions about personal details (usually in French from the teacher); information seeking; role-play.

Cues

There was a great deal of discussion about the nature of the stimulus. It was felt that this should be open-ended, that it should limit but not prescribe. Experimentation by teachers was to be encouraged. Among the suggestions offered were: colour photographs brought by the pupils themselves, videos, use of realia, bilingual conversations, and asking the candidate to interview the examiner. Using visuals as stimuli seems to present many problems: they are difficult to standardise, individuals may interpret them differently, they can be difficult to produce, and costly. It was pointed out that children might be confused by too great a variety of stimuli, particularly if the stimuli were not well linked together by the examiner. On the other hand, providing a natural 'flow' to an oral test has drawbacks. One may not get as many elements tested, and the test can seem rather contrived. There was appreciation of the Eclair booklet, which was felt to be less 'messy' than cards. Multiple-test materials could usefully be stored in a cardboard wallet with pockets, and it might be convenient for test purposes for the teacher to have a sheet on which everything on the separate pupils' cards was reproduced, to ease conduct of the test.

Cues in English were widely used, and had a number of advantages in clarity and speed: however, there was considerable concern about the backwash this practice might have on teaching in the classroom. Some teachers felt that they would be unhappy about any practice which might result in more English being spoken in the classroom, and did not want to encourage word-for-word translation. It was therefore important that any English used in tests should be open-ended. For example, 'You have a headache: how do you ask the chemist to help you?' rather than 'Ask for an aspirin', or even worse, 'Say "I want an aspirin"'. Such open-ended cues are free from a definition of the structure to be used: the cue is for a FUNCTION, and the task has a purpose.

Symbols could be useful as cues where there was standardisation of materials. Clearly, the problem of stimulus will need much attention as pupils proceed to higher levels. Situations should be as realistic as possible.

Single or mixed skills

Since speaking must necessarily involve listening comprehension, it was felt that it is not possible to separate the skills. Teachers felt that a speaking test is not purely a speaking activity. Since speaking and listening go together, both should be encouraged.

It was also felt that there was a danger of choosing tests which were easy to administer, rather than those which best tested communication, and concern was expressed about the predictability of much of the transactional language used in tests.

Relationship between content of syllabus and test

Most tests are samples, the problem being what to omit. The topics should be taken from the syllabus, but the content of the test should change, to show the ability of the pupil to communicate more fully. Some topics (being with a school party, being with one's own family, being alone in France) might remain standard in all levels but in a different form. For example, talking about oneself and one's family may be less important in a real-need situation, but more so in areas where France is relatively distant and contact is likely to be confined to penfriends or foreign visitors. In Wales, for example, with bilingual pupils, the personal element, including social situations, is most valid; survival situations should be valid for England, and might include, in this order: self and family, eating and drinking, buying, moving around, and accommodation.

It was suggested that the relationship between 'tu' and 'vous' might be difficult for eleven-year-olds, who would always be addressed as 'tu', but that in later stages 'vous' should be known. It was also felt that background knowledge should not be part of an oral interview, though in Level 2 pupils might describe their own towns in terms of compass points. Different areas need different skills, and Levels 2 and 3 could involve different types of visit. It was thought that the test should be perceived as valid for the whole population, and this would affect content, register and especially personal questions, but that, even so, there would be relatively small areas of difference.

The five topics mentioned above (self and family, eating and drinking, buying, moving around, accommodation) might be supplemented by: 6. leisure activities and 7. illness.

It was suggested that Level 1 might include topics 1 to 5, and Level 2 an extension of these topics plus topics 6 and 7. Level 2 might also include reporting what one had done or was going to do. This led to a discussion of the extent to which reading materials stimulate oral work: material which has been read may have to be passed on in oral form, or it may be necessary to ask for further information. News headlines practise oral asking of questions, for example. A heard source may also provide the stimulus. Level 3 might include a description of a past experience. Extension: (buying) phone calls, changing money. It was pointed out that for a Mode 3 oral test, pupils could suggest their own topics, spending a proportion of their time in preparation over two years; the tests would then be completely personalised.

There was some concern lest these topics might be too mundane, but it was generally thought that children gain excitement from studying topics they can see to be useful. Further tasks at a higher level might involve showing the town to a visitor from France, and giving two-minute talks about some area/aspect of France chosen by the pupil. This idea could be adapted for lower stages.

3. Conduct of Oral Tests

To record or not to record?

While it was recognised that in some situations recording would be difficult, and that some pupils and some teachers dislike recording interviews, there seemed nevertheless to be a number of advantages, notably for standardisation. Some children, it had been found, were not familiar with the taping procedure and it was obviously important to provide sufficient practice during the course. At present there is a division of practice, some schemes requiring compulsory taping, some asking for samples, some requiring no taping at all. (See next section on marking.) It was felt that teacher-performance improved over a period of time if tests were regularly recorded, and it was felt that recording should be encouraged for this in-service function, although there were, of course, limitations, eg supervision of the rest of the class, provision of a separate room for recording, etc. Another important point made was that speaking tests are taken less seriously because there is no record. It was not felt necessary to record step-by-step tests.

Preparation for tests

There was some feeling that at the lowest level there might be a case for specific test preparation, but there was concern at the possible backwash effect of this practice (parrotting). Obviously there should be nothing in the tests which had not been practised, but the main feeling (with some dissenters) was that specific test material should not be shown to the pupil. In the step-by-step tests, candidates would know the area of the questions, but would not be given unique answers. For the summative tests, the candidates might be reminded of the areas involved, which should obviously reflect not only the specific objectives but the general aims of the course. However, it was felt that to give specific practice of the actual test items, in the given composition and sequence, would encourage limited learning. The aim of the testing is to show the pupils and the teacher whether the objectives and aims of the teaching course have been achieved. The test is not the objective, and it is the objective which is important. The tests must be seen to relate back to the abilities which are being developed by the objectives. One member of the discussion group put it thus: We are not happy with an achievement which says, 'You have done this'. We want to be able to say, 'You can do this'.

Security

Although at Levels 1 and 2, it might be possible to conduct tests in front of a class, in the long run, if certification is going to be acceptable as an assessment of standards, then questions of security must be satisfied.

Marking considerations

Recording provides useful feedback about teaching and testing, and is useful for borderline cases. Sampling would provide most of these advantages for teachers who were opposed to taping, or short of tape, etc. It was suggested that recording should be tried for one year. Cassettes were thought to be more convenient than open-reel recorders, but using built-in microphones had not proved entirely satisfactory.

Getting the best from pupils

It was suggested that, at the beginning of a test, a warming-up period would be helpful. This could consist of two or three questions which were not marked. There might also be 'redundant' French from the teacher to set the atmosphere; appropriate praise should be offered; the examiner should adopt a 'friendly briskness', should offer one stimulus at once, and try to link questions; finally, both sides should be well prepared for the form of the test. The question of flexibility of entry was discussed. Should the candidate have some choice about when he wishes to be examined? This might be possible for step-by-step tests, but would have administrative problems for summative tests, and would tend to lose the sense of occasion which some teachers valued.

Pair work

This had possibilities, but was thought to be possibly unfair to some children. It was felt that one pupil should not be expected to inspire another, and that the whole exercise could become very artificial. If pair work was used, the pairs should be changed, and pupils might be continually assessed. Certainly pair work is a classroom procedure which should be encouraged, as should anything which encourages students to take responsibility for their own study. The performance of the teacher is after all variable, and this is one way of reducing the influence of the teacher.

4. Marking of Oral Tests

Marking scheme

It is essential to refer back to the specification of objectives when considering a marking scheme. Those in use at present vary from a two-point scale, based on the belief that communication is either achieved or it is not, to a five-point scale which allows for differentiation of degrees of fluency. The latter may be felt to be more suitable for higher levels. It was suggested that 'communication at all costs' might be the criterion for Level 1, and 'communication with respect to the interrelationship between speakers' for levels above this. Or there could be a scale which allows aggregation, the giving of supplementary marks for pronunciation, for example. There was some disagreement as to what constituted 'communication', and it was clear that this had to be standardised in local teacher-groups.

When to mark

Some teachers mark on the spot, which obviously saves time. Others record the tests and mark the tape, which allows the teacher to concentrate more fully on the marking and the testing.

Standardisation

It was felt to be most important to hold meetings of teachers involved to acquaint them with procedures and agree on a marking scheme. If possible there should be a standardisation meeting afterwards, and some sort of back-stop, eg a moderator who marks ten percent of the tests. Where samples only are recorded, teachers could be asked to make the sample representative of all levels of ability. The scale of operations is obviously important. In small areas, more meetings are practicable, whilst in a large area, much may have to be done by post, and some sort of standardising tape would be helpful to teachers. There was a strong feeling that a standardisation meeting was an important part of in-service training, and that there were strong grounds for releasing all teachers involved for one day for such a meeting (but not necessarily every year). Keeping taped samples was of course important in assessing the reliability of the test from year to year.

Grades

It is possible to start from a desirable pass-rate, eg 90 percent, and then define a pass-mark which will achieve this, or to fix a pass-mark and hope for a high pass-rate. It is difficult to define criteria, and it was suggested that at some future date a scale of performance might be worked out, against which the different levels of different schemes could be marked off. Acceptability of graded tests will obviously need a massive public relations exercise to help the public see what 'standards' are being referred to. If criterion-referenced tests are to be used, the objectives, the marking scheme, and the meaning of the certificate obtained should all be clearly stated. The system should be so organised that the testers can state the tasks, and say that those who pass, do so with (say) 70 percent efficiency. (cf music examinations where the pass mark is 100 out of 150.)

Moderation

It was important that each teacher-examiner should be moderated, and therefore some recording was essential, even if only a sample. Any standardisation or briefing meeting should take place near the test time.

Marking grid

A well-designed grid can help the teacher enormously. Ticks are a simple method of marking on the spot. Basically the system should be positive, and communication should be awarded marks above all else. Where there is room for impression marking, fluency might be taken into account.

Certificate

This might state: achievement =
or: basic communication) on
roughly accurate communication) specific
perfectly accurate communication) tasks

There was considerable discussion on the problem of including a 'mark for accuracy' without discouraging some pupils.

Weighting of marks

It was pointed out that groups should beware of giving a high proportion of marks on a very short test. A way should be found of giving a longer test in oral skills at Level 3 in order for a heavier mark weighting to be given. The oral should after all be equal to the other skills at higher levels.

FINAL PLENARY SESSION

There was considerable discussion of the need for graded tests to be standardised if they are to achieve credibility, although it was pointed out that the present public examination system is not absolutely reliable. It would perhaps stifle initiative if too much emphasis were placed on standardisation at this early stage. However, a public debate is needed to define what constitutes a standard. Under the present system of public examinations there is no attempt to define criteria, ie to show what a candidate who achieves Grade 2 can actually do.

There was an obvious contradiction between the idea of giving teachers autonomy in the classroom, and the desire for commonly accepted standards. At present the 'limits' are defined by the fact that like-minded teachers are involved with graded tests, but with a wider clientele, more standardisation would be necessary. It was pointed out that the present CSE Mode 3 syllabus arrangements give the best of both worlds, as there can be as many syllabuses as there are groups, and official certification as well. There was a danger that this Mode 3 facility might not remain, unless teachers press for it, since it is usually more expensive to administer than Mode 1.

It was thought that it would be difficult to draw up nationally agreed criteria which would be wide enough to accommodate all groups, and yet be rigorous enough for public examinations. It may not even be desirable to have national agreement about lower levels. A suggestion was made, however, that it might be possible for groups to agree on a common element at Levels 4 to 5, and that this could well be the oral test. This would assist comparability. It was decided that this suggestion should be referred to the GOML Co-ordinating Committee for further discussion and possible action, and it is hoped to involve the examination boards in the discussions.

Sheila Rowell
Secretary, GOML Co-ordinating Committee
13 June 1980

Appendix V:

Addresses of Groups

F1 = French Level 1
G1 = German Level 1
I1 = Italian Level 1
R1 = Russian Level 1
S1 = Spanish Level 1 etc
() = work in preparation

1. Avon
I1
Mr P Whittington, Senior Adviser
Modern Languages, PO Box 57, Avon
House North, St James Barton,
Bristol BS99 7EB

2. Barnet
F1, F2, G1, G2, S1
G Lee, General Adviser for
Modern Languages, Town Hall,
Friern Barnet, London N11 3DL

3. Basildon
(F1)
Mr J H Holmes, Basildon Teachers'
Centre, College of Further Education, Nethermayne, Basildon,
Essex

4. Belfast
F1
Mr H Sinnerton, Orangefield Boys'
School, Cameronian Drive, Belfast
BT5 6AW

5. Birmingham
F1 & 2, S1
Mr P Shipley, Modern Language
Centre, Camp Hill Teachers' Centre,
Stratford Road, Birmingham 11

6. Bolton
F1, (G1, F2)
Mr J Dixon, General Adviser,
PO Box 53, Civic Centre, Bolton

7. Bromley
F1 (adults)
Mr M Johnston, Sunnymead, Education
Department, Bromley Lane,
Chislehurst BR5 6LH

8. Bury
F2, S2
Mr C P Anthony, The Atheneum,
Education Department, Market Street,
Bury, Lancashire, BL9 0BN

9. Calderdale
(F1, F2)
Mr D Wardell, Modern Languages
Adviser, Education Department,
Alexandra Buildings, King Edward
Street, Halifax HX1 1ED

10. Cardiff F1, G1, S1, also Mode III 'O' in Spanish (F+G planned)	Mr O Myhre, Llanrhumney High School, Ball Road, Cardiff CF3 9YW
11. Chester College F1	Mr J Baxter, District Education Office, Chapel Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire
12. Cleveland F1, F2, F3	Mr R Hullcoop, Education Offices, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS1 3BN
13. Clwyd (F1)	Mr R Arrowsmith, Head of Languages, St Richard Gwyn High School, Flint, Clwyd
14. Coventry F1	Mr H Jones, Advisory Section, Education Department, The Council House, Coventry
15. Croydon (F1)	Miss F Handley, Inspector of Schools, London Borough of Croydon, Education Department, Taberner House, Park Lane, Croydon CR9 1TP
16. Dudley F1, F2 (G1)	Mr R David, 2 St James Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1JQ
17. East Midlands F1	Dr R Dunning, School of Education, University of Leicester, 21 University Road, Leicester LE1 7RF
18. Harlow F1, F2, G1	Mrs S Whiteside, Mark Hall Comprehensive School, First Avenue, Harlow, Essex
19. Haringey F1 (F2)	Mr R Goulding, Civic Centre, Signet Street, Enfield, Middlesex
20. Hereford & Worcs F1, F2, G1, S1	Mr D Mann, County Education Office, Castle Street, Worcester
21. Herts F1, F2, G1, G2	Miss V M Howe, Adviser for Modern Languages, Education Department, County Hall, Hertford SG13 8DF
22. Hillingdon F1, G1	Mr N White, Modern Languages Adviser, London Borough of Hillingdon Education Department, Civic Centre, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1UW
23. Humberside F1, F2, G1, (S1)	Mrs M V Buck, Education Offices, Eleanor Street, Grimsby, South Humberside
24. ILEA F1, F2	Mrs J Farrel, Head of Modern Languages, Catford County S G School, Bellingham Road, LondonSE6

25. Ireland (Eire) (F, G, I, S)	Irish Institute of Linguistics, 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2
26. Kent F1, F2, F3, G1	Miss J Blackwood, Education Department, Springfield, Maidstone, Kent ME14 2LJ
27. Kirklees F1, G1	Mr R Brook, Holmfirth High School, Heys Road, Holmfirth, Huddersfield HD7 2SE
28. Lancs/Cumbria F1+2, G1+2, S1+2	Mr D Peacock, Institute of European Education, St Martin's College, Bowerham, Lancashire
29. Leeds F2, F3	Mr B Page, Central Language Laboratory, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT
30. Liverpool (F1)	Mr P Carrington, Liverpool Institute High School for Girls, Blackburne Place, Liverpool L8 7PF
31. London (AMR) F1-5	Mr D Cross, 24 Werndee Road, SE25
32. Lothian F, G, S, I, R Levels 1-4	Mr J Clark, Dean Education Centre, Belford Road, Edinburgh EH4 3DS
33. Manchester (Gorton) F1, F2, G1	Mr D Lightfoot, Wright Robinson High School, Abbey Hey Lane, Gorton, Manchester M18 8RL
34. Newcastle F1, F2, G1, G2, S1	Mr P Kearle, Teachers' Centre, Pendower Hall, West Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 6PP
35. Northamptonshire F1, F2, G1, S1	Mr D G Walker, Daventry Southbrook Comprehensive School, Hawke Road, Daventry, Northants NN11 4LJ
36. North Staffs F1	Mr R Savage, Advisory Officer, Education Department, Unity House, Hanley, Stoke on Trent ST1 1QN
37. North Tyneside	Mr R Sanderson, Education Offices, The Chase, North Shields, North Tyneside
38. Northumberland	Mr J Squibb, Adviser for Modern Languages, Eldon House, Regent Centre, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne NE15 6PP

39. North Wilts as OMLAC + Mode 3 CSE	Mr E Bird, Education Department, County Hall, Trowbridge, Wilts
40. Norwich F1	Mr R E Whiley, Central Area Education Office, Gladstone House, 28 St Giles Street, Norwich NR2 1TQ
41. Oldham F2, F3, G1, S1	Head of Modern Languages, Royton & Crompton School, Blackshaw Lane, Oldham OL2 6NT
42. Oxfordshire F1, F2, G1, G2 S1, I1 (Ch 1)	Mr K Gordon, Curriculum Development Leader, Witney Teachers' Centre, Old Police Station, Church Green, Witney, Oxfordshire
43. Richmond	Mrs E Cornwall, Head of Languages, Twickenham Girls' School, Clifden Road, Twickenham, Middlesex
44. Rotherham	
45. Sheffield F1, F2, G1, G2	Mr R Brook, 83 Barnsley Road, Upper Cumbernorth, Huddersfield HD8 8NN
46. Shropshire F1, (F2) G1 (G2) (S1)	Mr M Gillons, The William Brooks School, Farley Road, Much Wenlock, Salop
47. South West F1, F2, G1	Mr D Ellis, Director, The Language Centre, Somerset Education Centre, Parkfield, Park Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 7LX
48. Strathclyde F1 - 'O' Grade	Mr I Boffey, Adviser in Modern Languages, Renfrew Division Regional Offices, Cotton Street, Paisley PA1 1LE
49. Suffolk F1, F2	Mr A Hellen, Orwell High School, Maidstone Road, Felixstowe
50. Sunderland	Mr P Lavin, Modern Languages Adviser, Teachers' Centre, 2 The Esplanade, Sunderland, Co Durham
51. Surrey F1	Mr R Bailess, Education Office, 14a North Street, Guildford, Surrey, GU1 4AF
52. Waltham Forest F1, F3	Miss J Campbell, The Teachers' Centre, Queens Road, Walthamstow, London E17 8QS

53.	West Sussex F1, F2, G1	Mr E Garner, Education Department, West Sussex County Council, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex PO19 1RF
54.	Wolverhampton F1	Mr Gorman, 105 Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, Wolverhampton
55.	York (French) F1-4	Mr M Buckby, Language Teaching Centre, University of York, York YO1 1JT
56.	York (German) G2	Mr A Peck, University of York, Micklegate House, York YO1 1JT

Appendix VI:

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Abbreviations: AVLJ - Audio-Visual Language Journal
ML - Modern Languages
MLS - Modern Languages in Scotland

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*Those publications marked with an asterisk have now been published by Pergamon Press, and are available from CILT. Other documents, both published and unpublished, are available from The Council of Europe, 67006 Strasbourg Cedex, France. CILT also holds copies of Un niveau-seuil, Un nivel umbral and Adaptation de 'Un niveau-seuil' pour des contextes scolaires. For catalogue and price list, write to: CILT, 20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP.